ALLAN NADLER: THE MESSIAH OF CROWN HEIGHTS

MAY 4, 1992 · $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Kidnapping Gustavo Gorriti · Executing Roger Coleman · Burying British socialism

Why Clinton Can't Win

by Fred Barnes

Why The Democrats Want To Lose

by Sidney Blumenthal

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CORRESPONDENCE

Our puritan

To the editors:

In "Ids 'R' Us" (Washington Diarist, April 13) Robert Wright charges that Bill Clinton's "legendary" infidelity and "pseudo-anguished" soul-searching about the Vietnam War are not only personal failings, they disqualify him from exercising "moral leadership" as president. Putting aside the fact that Wright's mean-spirited comments more closely resemble the type of character sniping you might hear at a Roger Ailes cocktail party than a well-reasoned critique of Clinton and his message, Wright seems to misunderstand fundamentally the essence of moral leadership.

What, I wonder, would Wright think about the capacity for moral leadership of adulterers Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy? How about Eugene McCarthy, war resister? Or, horror of horrors, adulterers/war resisters Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy? I shudder to think about the consequences of a Martin Luther King preaching personal responsibility to the disadvantaged.

Bill Clinton is no saint. His moral leadership stems from the fact that although he has had moral lapses—he is, after all, only human—he has worked to make good. If the choice is between a candidate who strives to establish a moral standard that he sometimes does not meet and a president who stands for nothing, then, as even Wright conceded, the decision is clear.

STUART VENZKE
Lanham, Maryland

Your puritan

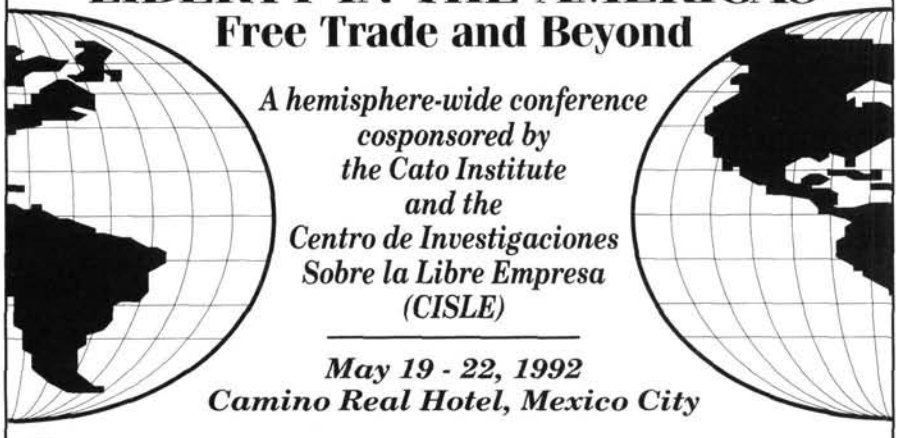
To the editors:

Sidney Blumenthal's "The Puritan" (March 23) is certainly the first time I've read an article attacking an individual's character because of his sincerity and virtue. Journalists are forever crying out that we no longer have candidates who stand for something greater than themselves. Now, when we've finally seen that very thing in the person of Paul Tsongas, he is castigated for what Blumenthal has decided is "puritanism." What's next? Praising Clinton for his apparent lack of a value system?

At least Tsongas had a message and was willing to deliver it in the face of adversity. Tsongas was fully aware that his stance on a middle-class tax cut would be unpopular but had the courage to state the "hard truth" that such a tax cut was economically unwise. Moreover, he was a candidate with a rare combination of conviction, integrity, and forthrightness. Perhaps the American people may miss the opportunity to vote for him in November partly because Democrats read too many articles with viewpoints that are both trivial and myopic.

JILL A. STREIM
Spring Hill, Florida

LIBERTY IN THE AMERICAS
Free Trade and Beyond



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Paul-bearer

To the editors:

I was dismayed by your publication of Glenn R. Simpson's assault on my integrity in "Bank Robber" (March 23), which takes the point of view that there is something "curious" about the fact that CenTrust's head, David Paul, was raising funds for the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee and had contact with me at the same time that I was investigating BCCI. After all, to quote Simpson, "CenTrust was a virtual BCCI subsidiary by mid-1988." Presumably I should have known better, Simpson contends.

The problem is, neither I, my investigators, federal investigators, local law enforcement, nor anyone else outside BCCI and CenTrust knew of the connection at the time. To cover himself, Simpson briefly acknowledges this. Immediately he then distorts the record of hearings I conducted to suggest, darkly, that perhaps I or someone else shut down my investigation of BCCI, presumably to protect David Paul, and that there are suppressed documents that would prove it.

The supposedly suppressed documents appear in the transcript of our hearings on BCCI and show that various of our targets tried to stall, delay, and impede our investigation. The record also shows that we persisted throughout to get the full truth about BCCI's criminality in the United States and globally.

JOHN KERRY
Washington, D.C.

The writer is a U.S. senator from Massachusetts.

Glenn R. Simpson replies:

It was Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark Jakowski who stated, under oath before the Foreign Relations Committee, that there were allegations that Senator Kerry's probe had been terminated in a manner that was "suspect."

Good housekeeping

To the editors:

Michael Kinsley's criticism of my economic analysis of Proposition 13 ("Santa

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Clause," TRB, March 30) is superficially plausible. But it is wrong. My point was as follows: if house buyers know they will pay higher property taxes, they will bid less for the house. Buyers are indifferent between paying $200,000 for a house and a present value of $20,000 in property taxes or paying $210,000 for a house and a present value of $10,000 in property taxes. Either way, the present value of their payments is $220,000.

Kinsley agrees with my argument on the buyer's side. But he thinks that the seller's loss of the tax break makes him less willing to sell. Therefore, reasons Kinsley, the seller will hold out for a higher price. Net effect on price, says Kinsley: ambiguous.

But Prop 13 has no effect on sellers' willingness to sell at a given price. In economic jargon, the houseowners' supply curve does not shift. Imagine that you are barely willing to sell a house for $300,000 to someone who will pay property taxes of $20,000. If you then find out that he will instead pay property taxes of $30,000, you don't become any less willing to sell at $300,000. Kinsley might argue that you would become less willing because you know that *you* must pay higher taxes on the house you buy to replace the one you sell. But remember my point in the first paragraph that Kinsley agrees with: when house buyers know they will have to pay higher property taxes, they bid less for the house. When the demand curve shifts down and the supply curve stays the same, the price must fall. The effect is not ambiguous.

Bottom line: whatever other problems Prop 13 may have, it does not discriminate against new buyers. The whole basis of the Nordlinger suit against Prop 13 is invalid.

DAVID R. HENDERSON
Monterey, California

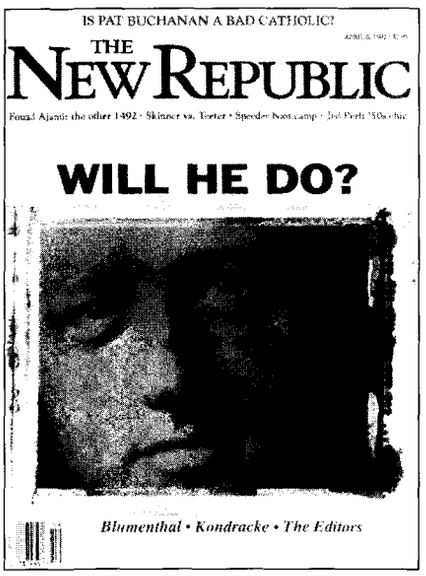
The writer is a senior research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

Michael Kinsley replies:

David Henderson is wrong. It's true that taxes on real estate are to a large extent (though not completely) capitalized into the price of the property. The burden of any change in property taxes, therefore, generally falls on the owner at the time that change is made, not when the tax is actually levied. Proposition 13 had two parts: one, lowering tax rates and assessments immediately, presumably raised house prices; the other, raising assessments at some future date, presumably lowered house prices. At issue is the second effect.

If, in 1978, California had voted to increase property tax assessments in 1990, house prices would have declined by the present value (in 1978) of the future tax increase (in 1990 and after). In that case Henderson's analysis would be correct: the 1978 owner would bear the burden, not the buyer in 1990 or after. But that is not how Prop 13 works. The assessment increases, not at any fixed date, but whenever the property changes hands. The longer the present owner holds on, the lower the present value, at any given moment, of the future tax increase.

Since—by Henderson's own assumption—the present owner and not the buyer bears the burden of that tax increase, the owner has a clear incentive to hold on longer than he otherwise would. This will lead him to demand a higher price than he otherwise would. Which means that, in effect, the buyer does bear at least part of the cost of the tax increase that takes effect when she takes possession.



Insensitive

To the editors:

Why so many cute, and demeaning, references to ethnicity in your Notebook section? In your March 30 issue you criticized the slavish coverage of the Gotti trial in the New York tabloids, commenting that such frenzied attention on men with names like Gotti and Gravano brings to mind "opera singers, fashion designers, or perhaps celebrated chefs." A week later you suggested that the bizarre, belligerent behavior of Senator Moynihan could be attributed to the "influence of St. Patrick's Day" or perhaps the "Buchanan campaign." (What is the rationale behind this unusual link, if not a comment on Buchanan and Moynihan's shared heritage?) Are we to assume from this that rowdyism and overheated political rhetoric are somehow peculiar to the Irish, or simply that the writers of TNR enjoy a good, old-fashioned ethnic stereotype now and then, to liven up the prose? Across the page from the Gotti piece I read TNR's riposte to Secretary Baker's alleged outburst against American Jews, which the author titled "Same to You, Buddy." Having read your recent issues, I know just how that author feels.

ROBERT M. TONRY
Convent Station, New Jersey

Perspicuous

To the editors:

I was amused by the April 6 letter of Kelly Lewis, a reader distraught by his fruitless search to unearth the meaning of the term "poujadism" even after recourse to his wife, who "actually reads the entire *Atlantic* every month." (The word had been used in the March 9 editorial.) A closer reading of the concurrent issue of the *Atlantic* (April 1992) would have revealed the following illuminating fragment:

> ... the Front was not "just" a protest movement (like the anti-tax Poujadist phenomenon of the late 1950s ...) [p. 43]

Are we witnessing a lexical resuscitation or a mere coincidence? In either case, even a well-educated reader needs a perspicuous parenthesis from time to time.

GREGORY F. ROBISON
Chevy Chase, Maryland

To the editors:

I would be curious to know what reference books constitute Kelly Lewis's $15,000 collection and what Professor Thornton was flipping through. There are at least two fairly common publications that seemingly were not consulted: 1) Encyclopedia Britannica, which contains a decent paragraph on Pierre Poujade, a right-wing French politician of the 1950s, and 2) the Oxford English Dictionary, in which the earliest citation for "Poujadism" appropriately comes from an issue of the quintessentially middlebrow *Life* magazine.

STEPHEN LANGLEY
Fremont, California

To the editors:

Pierre Poujade, which I think is pronounced "joad," was a French politician of the then extreme right wing in France. Xenophobic and nationalistic, he was in the position of the present politician, Jean-Marie Le Pen, and perhaps of the same party. A huge fat fellow with horn-rims, which gave him an owly appearance, I think he died of a heart attack in the '60s, before de Gaulle did.

S.J. PARK
Austin, Texas

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FROM LONDON

Tea and pundits

The day before the British election on April 9, Rupert Murdoch's influential newspaper *The Sun* ran nine pages of hysterical invective against the Labour Party and its leader, Neil Kinnock. "Nightmare on Kinnock Street" was the running headline over articles warning of the consequences of a Labour victory. Mortgage rates would soar, house prices would collapse, small babies would die in hospitals, immigrants would swarm in, meddlesome European bureaucrats would regulate "everything from the sort of oak trees we can grow to the width of our condoms."

The special section ended in an interview with a psychic who revealed that, from beyond the grave, such popular figures as Mao Zedong, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Robert Maxwell were urging a vote for Labour, whereas Winston Churchill, Queen Victoria, and Elvis Presley had endorsed the Conservatives.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the journalistic evolutionary scale, commentator Charles Moore was simpering in the highbrow *Spectator* that if Labour won, his children would get splinters in their feet because he would be unable to afford carpeting for his stairs.

With Labour leading in the polls until election day itself, there was a genuine sense of panic among the powers-that-be. Drink that last bottle of champagne—the Nazis are about to descend on Paris. In the end, the Tories eked out a majority and John Major remains prime minister. The consensus explanation is that the voters' general discontent and desire for a change was finally overcome by a fear of higher taxes and distrust of Kinnock, who was widely perceived as insubstantial and devious.

Kinnock is credited with having run a brilliant campaign. But somehow, like Bill Clinton's, Kinnock's very talent as a politician was turned against him. The argument seems to be that a super-salesman's skill must be in inverse correlation to the quality of the goods he is selling.

My favorite convention of political analysis is that before an election, every tiny detail of campaign mechanics is regarded as crucially important, whereas, immediately afterward, the same pundits interpret the result in terms of sweeping historical trends. Since I'm on vacation, I've been treating myself to not reading *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page. Have I missed their editorial gloating that the British result shows the continuing worldwide rejection of big government and higher taxes, with ominous implications for the Democrats? If so, I haven't missed it much.

But fair enough. If Labour had won, I would have been eager to perceive a worldwide pendulum swing away from the conservative policies of the 1980s, with ominous implications for the Republicans. Nevertheless, the similarities between the British election and the American one are actually pretty limited.

Above all, the entire debate here in Britain was way to the left of the debate in America. Labour was proposing to raise the top tax rate by almost 20 points—from 40 percent to 59 percent. The increase would have hit starting around $38,000 a year. Unlike the Democrats—who propose an increase of three or four points starting at incomes well into six figures—Labour was not proposing a tax cut for those with lower incomes. The Tories, with the help of a remarkably biased press, did an excellent job of persuading average voters to fear for their wallets (even though something like eight of ten households would have been unaffected). But their demagogic challenge was easier than the Republicans' will be.

The other big issue here was the National Health Service. Labour claimed—quite unfairly—that a few small market-oriented reforms initiated by Margaret Thatcher were part of a Tory plot to privatize the health system. This is like the hardy Democratic perennial that the Republicans want to cut Social Security. They ought to want to, given their alleged principles, but in real life they wouldn't dare. So it was entertaining to hear every campaigning Tory swear undying devotion to socialized medicine. The slightest hint that Major shared George Bush's professed views on this matter would have lost him his job in a landslide.

The other big entertainment for a visiting American was watching the Brits worry themselves silly over whether their politics was becoming too "presidential," meaning too obsessed with personalities and too victimized by negative campaigning, "spin doctors," and other American vices. They needn't worry. By our standards, their campaign was substantive and serious. There were the usual politicians' lies and exaggerations on both sides, but they were, for the most part, lies and exaggerations about important issues.

No one was asked whether he has smoked marijuana. The fact that the leader of the third party, the Liberal Democrats, had had an affair with his secretary several years ago was briskly exposed, enjoyed, and then ignored. No one made an issue of the make of car his opponent drove, or of some small grant by a government arts agency. The only issue in the campaign that made you wonder, "What are they wasting their time arguing about *that* for?" was fox-hunting. (Labour wants to outlaw it.)

What passes here for a dirty trick is simply pathetic. In one constituency I visited, the Tories were making an issue of an allegedly deceptive leaflet being distributed by Labour. The deception consisted of saying that part of Labour's proposed tax increase would be phased in, although the party's national platform declared that it would be imposed immediately. Hardly Roger Ailes material.

Why are British political campaigns more substantive? It is not that British politicians and their handlers are less cynical or that British voters are less susceptible to manipulation. It is not the ban on political TV commercials. The main explanation, I think, is the different political structure.

It is startling for an American to realize that when a British politician says that something or other will happen if he is elected, it may actually happen—within days. The stately pace of American campaigns; the gap between election and inauguration; the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches; the seemingly permanent tradition of a Republican president and a Democratic Congress; the lack of cohesion within the American parties themselves—all these elements conspire to weaken the connection between what is debated in elections and what happens in government.

If a British prime minister is elected on a platform promising that the government will do X, Y, or Z, he or she has no excuse for not doing X, Y, or Z, and nowhere to hide from the consequences if X, Y, or Z turns out badly. An American presidential candidate has an infinity of excuses, and so can be far more creative in what he says to get elected. Campaigns turn more on atmospherics than on specific government actions of any sort.

Voters, too, have it undeservedly easy in our system. It allows them the luxury of believing unbelievable promises and then complaining of betrayal when the promises are not fulfilled. Or of voting on the basis of irrelevant issues, then blaming the politicians when serious matters go unattended.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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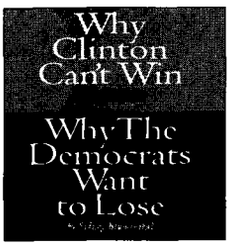

Cover by Eric Baker for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Articles on pages 15 and 19.

2 **CORRESPONDENCE** Clinton's sex life, the meaning of 'poujadism,' &c.

4 **MICHAEL KINSLEY** TRB: TEA AND PUNDITS Notes from the British election.

7 **THE EDITORS** EUROPA, EUROPA The West's changes now dwarf the East's.

8 **NOTEBOOK** Yasir Arafat's dumb luck, Roger Clinton's risky business, &c.

9 **ELIZABETH BECKER** SEATTLE POSTCARD: PRIVATE IDAHO Japan-bashing—then and now.

10 **MICHAEL IGNATIEFF** SUBURBIA'S REVENGE The death of English socialism.

11 **JOSEPH FINDER** CHARITY CASE Why the United Way's head actually deserved a raise.

13 **ANDERS ÅSLUND** RUBLE-SHOOTERS What the West should do in Moscow's new crisis.

14 **GUSTAVO GORRITI** MOUSE TRAP How Alberto Fujimori kidnapped my Mac.

15 **SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL** LOSERS Congressional Democrats are running scared, and many others are wavering. But Clinton's the nominee. And he has a shot.

19 **FRED BARNES** LOSER Four reasons for Clinton's impending defeat in November.

21 **JOHN TUCKER** DEAD END Roger Coleman's execution is planned for May 20. Thanks to the Rehnquist Court, it doesn't matter that he may be innocent.

26 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: OUT OF THE PAST Thoughts on the fiftieth anniversary of *Casablanca*; *The Babe* ushers in baseball season.

27 **ALLAN NADLER** LAST EXIT TO BROOKLYN The Lubavitchers of Crown Heights and their powerful, preposterous messianism.

34 **JOHN DRURY** POEM *Stadium*

35 **ROY PORTER** THE HEART OF THE COUNTRY *Customs in Common* by E. P. Thompson

38 **PEARL K. BELL** BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND REMEMBERING *Billie Dyer and Other Stories* by William Maxwell

41 **JACOB WEISBERG** NEWARK DIARIST: PARTISANS

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A Question of Fairness

BY ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Nowadays, most people who talk about improving U.S. education are all for raising standards. But "standards" is just another buzz word if we don't agree on certain things: what children need to know, what we mean by satisfactory levels of achievement and how we'll know whether kids are attaining these levels. So you'd think there would be a lot of enthusiasm for a proposal that is now before Congress. It would establish a council to coordinate the development of national standards and assessments and make sure it's done properly. Instead, this proposal, which is based on the recommendations of the National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST), is under considerable fire. Some people object because they are terrified by the idea of a federal exam; others are certain that the system would be grossly unfair.

Those who worry about a federal exam can rest easy. What NCEST proposed was not a federal exam but a national assessment system composed of different tests, none of which would be created or imposed by the federal government. Some would be created by partnerships among states, some by a single state and some by private organizations. But they would all have to be based on nationally agreed upon standards for what students should know and be able to do—like the curriculum framework already created by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The government's only role would be to provide some financial support for groups trying to develop standards and assessments, coordinate their efforts and attest to the quality of the results.

Many are unwilling to change our tests until they are sure the new ones will be absolutely fair.

People who are worried about fairness raise a more complicated set of issues. They, too, agree that we need to improve standards and assessments because kids are not learning what they should even though they are being tested to death. But many of these people are unwilling to change the present system until they are convinced that the new tests will be absolutely fair. By "fair," they mean that all youngsters must have an equal chance of doing well on the new assessments.

Some of them say a new assessment system won't be fair until we make sure all mothers have proper health care while they are pregnant. Or it won't be fair until all kids are able to participate in high-quality early childhood programs. Or until every school has the same amount of money to spend per child and all our schools shape up. Other people say that we shouldn't go with new assessments until we're sure they are valid on all sorts of scientific and statistical grounds and have no disparate impact on minorities.

These are not trivial considerations. We should pursue these goals. But if we have to wait until we attain them before trying to establish national standards and assessments, we'll wait forever. It's like saying we have to wait until our society is perfect before trying to improve it.

Students in other industrialized nations are doing better than our youngsters, and one of the main reasons is that these countries have standards for their students, tests and testing systems. Their assessments are not perfect, and neither are their societies. But standards and assessments tell them things they need to know. Students find out if they are working hard enough. Their parents can find out, too, so they can exert a little extra pressure. Teachers can see where they are not getting through to students and where they need new or better materials.

In these countries, standards and assessments are also used to make decisions about students: Who ought to go on to university and who should follow a technical or vocational program. Many Americans don't like this idea because they assume that "sorting" students means that a favored few get a first-class education and the rest have to put up with the dregs. After all, that's what happens here when we sort kids. So we ignore the fact that many of these countries have programs that work for *all* their students. These countries help kids who are at the bottom as well as those in the middle and at the top, and we can, too.

Because we have no national standards, our students don't have to meet any but the most minimal standards to graduate from high school. If they have a diploma and enough money, they can find a college to admit them; and the employers who are willing to hire kids right out of high school aren't interested in anything but the diploma, either.

Our current system is devastatingly bad for all our youngsters. We are not producing a top group that is equivalent to that of other industrialized nations, and our bottom group is in terrible shape. We are crippling our youngsters because we're giving them the wrong message.

Those who point to the fact that all of our kids are not equally prepared are absolutely right. This means that meeting standards will be tougher for some students than for others. But people who say the kids won't be able to do it are wrong. They're the same people who argued that requiring students to pass minimum competency exams for high school graduation would lead to a dramatic increase in high school dropout rates. It didn't. Many of the students people expected to quit school worked hard enough to meet the standard expected of them, and they graduated from high school.

Holding out on establishing standards and assessments until we are sure that everything is absolutely fair has a nice humane sound. But it is an excuse for doing nothing—for maintaining the status quo—and that would be terribly *un*fair to all our students.

MR. SHANKER'S COMMENTS APPEAR IN THIS AD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS. READER CORRESPONDENCE IS INVITED. ADDRESS YOUR LETTERS TO MR. SHANKER AT THE AFT, 555 NEW JERSEY AVE., N.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20001. ©1991 BY ALBERT SHANKER.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 4, 1992

EUROPA, EUROPA

In retrospect, the euphoria that greeted the collapse of communism in 1989 was remarkably short-lived. Economic collapse and ethnic violence were predicted for many Eastern European and formerly Soviet nations, and indeed, there have been moments of crisis. The current impasse in Moscow is just such a moment. But in general the last few years have been marked by a surprising absence of calamity. Failure—so widely forecast—has been as rare as it has been profound. The fate of Serbia and Croatia has not, mercifully, been anyone else's—so far.

The reason for this is that what has happened in Eastern Europe over the last decade has been in some sense a return to normality: nationhood, freer markets, a civil society. Compare it with Western Europe, where abnormality is increasingly the norm. The nation-state, by far the most stable political institution in modern Europe, is being gently but irrevocably abandoned; a critical element of economic power—monetary policy—is being ceded to a new central bank whose accountability is in doubt; currencies have been partially dissolved; ambitious new institutions—a European Parliament and social charter—are being swiftly constructed. When the history of the late 1980s and early 1990s is written, the real radicalism may well be seen to have occurred in Western, not Eastern, Europe; in Brussels, not Moscow.

The recent elections across Europe—from Scotland to Sicily—were the first to take account of this new reality. If the promise of the Treaty of Maastricht is fulfilled, and the Western European nation-state is largely dissolved, they may well be the last meaningful national elections ever held in Britain, France, Italy, and Germany. What they reflected were two turning points for Europe: the end of European socialism as a leading force in its politics, and the rebirth of Western European regionalism.

The end of European socialism is particularly dramatic. The Labour Party did not just lose in Britain; it was humiliated. Having abandoned much of their leftist baggage, the Labourites failed to end three terms of Tory rule. Their redistributive message (see "Suburbia's Revenge" by Michael Ignatieff, page 10) was decisively rejected, their invocation of class seen as a profoundly reactionary move. The Labour Party that inherits the tradition of collective social welfare, public ownership, and progressive taxation is now dead, along with all those parties that cling intermittently to that mantra: the French and Italian Socialists, and the German Social Democrats. Although President Mitterrand is still hanging on to power in France, he presides over little that could be called socialist, and the latest regional elections showed a steep decline for his party in favor of the far right and the Greens. In Germany the much-heralded social democratic revival in the newly unified state failed to happen. The threat to Kohl comes now from the nationalist right, not the collectivist left. In Italy recent elections showed a slide for the Christian Democrats, but a steeper decline for the left: the Socialists dropping from 14.3 percent to 13.6 percent, and the rump of the Communists from 26.6 percent to 21.7 percent.

In Italy and Britain this socialist decline was allied with a resurgent capitalist regionalism. The Lombardy League in northern Italy represents a near revolt by Italy's most productive region. In Britain the Tories won because prosperous Southeastern England refused to transfer any of its wealth to distant British regions or to a national government it did not trust. Labour won a mere three seats in the entire region. These acts of economic secession have gained new strength from the weakening of national sovereignty. Southern England now looks as much to Germany and Italy as to the north of England for its economic future. Northern Italy looks to Frankfurt, not to Naples, for its destiny. The Euro-yuppies of Milan and London, Munich and Barcelona, have increasingly more in common with each other than with their fellow countrymen.

Some of these shifts are subtle; many are irresistible; all of them are deep. With the concentration of political and economic power in Brussels and Berlin, national votes mean less and less, regional affairs more and more. What we are witnessing beneath the surface of European elections is a new and revolutionary experiment in transnational federalism. While Eastern Europe returns to a nineteenth-century order, Western Europe looks more and more like the fifteenth: an area of regional semi-states, where political sovereignty is inchoate and rival areas compete for economic power. It could contain more surprises—and have more international impact—than any number of new crises in Moscow. •

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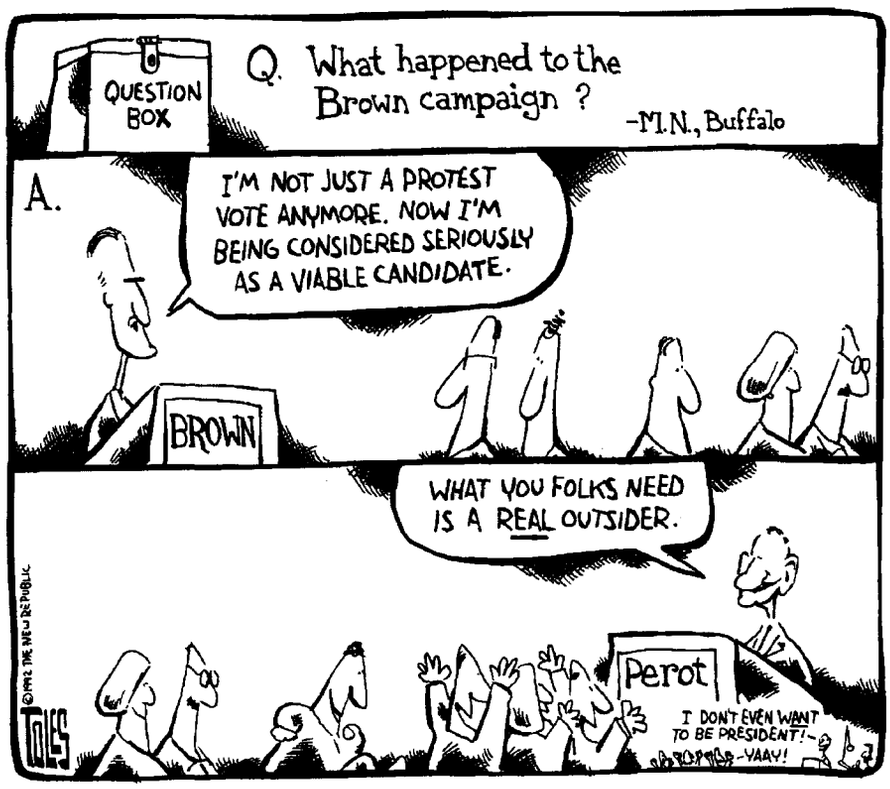
NOTEBOOK

BUSHISMS: "'With frequent changes laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, with new discoveries were made, new truth discovered, matters of opinions change is certain of that. Institutions must advance also to keep pace with my times.' If I've ever heard an eloquent plea for term limits, that's it." —April 4, reading from an inscription engraved inside the Jefferson Memorial

"Blame the Congress, because we've got the best health care plan there is. And it does not socialize medicine in this country. It preserves the quality of care. It gives health care access to all and it does it without reducing the quality of American education."—*Ibid.*, walking to the Jefferson Memorial


QUESTION BOX
Q. What happened to the Brown campaign ?
-M.N., Buffalo
A.
I'M NOT JUST A PROTEST VOTE ANYMORE. NOW I'M BEING CONSIDERED SERIOUSLY AS A VIABLE CANDIDATE.
BROWN
WHAT YOU FOLKS NEED IS A REAL OUTSIDER.
Perot
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO BE PRESIDENT!-VAAV!
TOLES

OH, BROTHER: "BROTHER BRAGGED OF LIAISONS IN CLINTON'S MANSION" reads the headline on *The Washington Times* of April 14. With this story, a fusion of the Clinton sex scandal and the Brown drug scandal, the media's investigation of the "character" issue has descended to the level of absurdity. As the story acknowledges, there is no evidence that Clinton's brother Roger, who was convicted of cocaine distribution in 1985, ever used drugs in the governor's mansion, or that Clinton knew he had sexual liaisons there. But what would it matter if Clinton did know? Consensual sex, at last check, was still legal, even in Arkansas.

STILL THERE: The fact that Yasir Arafat survived the crash of his plane in Libya is being taken, at least by Palestinian Arabs, as a sign of his invincibility and of the sure victory of their cause. From Israelis the reaction is one of scarcely concealed exasperation. Both sides, we believe, have it wrong. Arafat's durability is that of a relic. In those hours when his acolytes thought he might actually be dead, there were the glimmerings of a chance of a practical compromise with Israel. Now that he's alive, Arafat once more can hold his followers captive to his fatal delusions. Their movement is in disarray, if not in tatters, short of money, short of entrée, short of everything save slogans and stones. Without Arafat, his heirs might have been able to go to the Saudis, Kuwaitis, and other Gulf states, atone for the alliance with Saddam Hussein, and make some kind of deal with the new Arab order. Two of Arafat's cronies, the brothers Khalid al-Hassan and Hani al-Hassan, had prepped themselves for such a maneuver. Of course, it's impossible now. So Arafat's survival is no boon for the Palestinians. King Fahd, for good reasons, won't forgive Arafat; and Israel, for even better reasons, can't.

ASHEN-FACED: We don't believe there's anything shameful about being HIV-positive or about having AIDS. But we do know that many people believe there is something shameful about it, and for that reason, people with AIDS may prefer not to have their illness publicized. As Arthur Ashe tells it, that was his motive in keeping his medical condition to himself. The actions of *USA Today* in pressuring him to divulge his condition is one of the most troubling examples yet of the press's new confidence in invading the privacy of public and private individuals. To be sure, Ashe would have been a great role model three years ago for people with AIDS. He could have been an early Magic Johnson. But he chose not to: a choice that may not be particularly altruistic, or even of purely private interest, but a choice that surely should be respected.

SORRY: In "Underwatergate" (TNR, April 27), Gabriel Schoenfeld stated that the submarine accident he wrote about had not been reported in the American press. It had been: in *The Washington Post*, October 25, 1991. •

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SEATTLE POSTCARD

PRIVATE IDAHO

By Elizabeth Becker

The last "Japan Day" at Seattle's Bitter Lake amusement park was July 27, 1941. Japanese-Americans were given free bus service, and young women had their pictures taken in front of the rides. One Japanese-American family saved the red entry ticket, and it now hangs in an exhibit at the Wing Luke Museum here called "Executive Order 9066: Fifty Years Before and Fifty Years After." Six months after that summer day the *Seattle Sunday Times* declared, "101 JAPS SEIZED IN SEATTLE," heralding the beginning of the round-up and banishment of 12,892 Japanese-Americans from Washington state to bleak camps located further inland. Seattle's Japanese-Americans have centered this exhibit chronicling their community's centennial anniversary on the event that tore it apart: the American government's order to intern Japanese-Americans during World War II for fear they might become spies for Japan.

One of the major gateways for Japanese immigrants at the end of the nineteenth century, Seattle today openly displays the strong influence Japanese-Americans have had on the city since its pioneer days, when they shaped entire industries and refined the lumberjack aura of the town. What's more, the city for the most part has refused to take part in the nation's current round of Japan-bashing. Press reports attribute this to Seattle's thriving business with Japan—it sells goods from Boeing jets to recreational equipment and lumber, and has managed to stay solvent during the recession. But Seattle's pride in its Asian veneer is new, and it hasn't always been so friendly to Japan.

The Japanese-American community tells its own story in the exhibit through donations retrieved largely from attics and scrapbooks. There is a photograph of the Seattle Taiyo baseball team challenging the visiting Tokyo Giants on May 12, 1935—recalling baseball's popularity here without requiring any reminder of today's controversy that pits Seattle against the U.S. baseball commissioner, who has refused Nintendo's offer to help the city keep its professional baseball team, the Mariners. There are sepia-tone photographs from the same era of young Japanese-American girls taking violin lessons or playing on the Bellevue Seinenkai Girls' Basketball team. But then the exhibit's mood changes. The '30s are followed by the Second World War and the detention order.

It is clear that the shadow of racism hovered over the community from the beginning. At the turn of the century the King County Republican Club tried to exclude Japanese from the Seattle area altogether. It claimed they were a "menace to the conditions which make it possible for the intelligent American working man to maintain himself, his family, and his home."

In 1920 the president of Seattle's Anti-Japanese League made a declaration that could have been made by one of today's demagogues:

> They are not inferior to us. In fact, they constantly demonstrate their ability to best the white man at his own game in farming, fishing, and business. They will work harder, deprive themselves of every comfort and luxury, make beasts of burden of their women, and stick together, making a combination that America cannot defeat.

This quotation comes from the exhibit's excellent catalog, written by David Takami. He chronicles the particular animosity the Japanese met when they crossed the Pacific. They were resented, like Jewish Americans, out of fear of their superiority; they were discriminated against for their color like black Americans; and even though they quickly learned English, they were stigmatized for guarding their foreign ways like Italians.

Although they were accused of trying to best the white man, in fact they were using the discards of the white man to become productive Americans. Japanese-Americans cleared lands white settlers considered too wild, uprooting stumps and cultivating crops that eventually filled nearly three-quarters of the vegetable stands at the city's farmer's markets. They were blamed for being too productive, and in 1921 the state legislature passed a law forbidding aliens from owning property. Undeterred, the issei, or Japanese who immigrated, deeded their property to their children, who were citizens by birthright and known as nisei. The state fought back, and by 1923 passed another law forbidding that practice.

Certain Seattle communities enforced covenants that kept Japanese-Americans from buying homes, ensuring that they settled in or near Nihonmachi, or Japantown, which is today's international district. The unions refused them membership. Nevertheless, the Japanese-American community thrived. Although they represented a mere 2 percent of the population, at the outbreak of the Second World War they dominated the city's hotel and apartment house businesses, ran nearly half of the restaurants, one-fourth of the dry cleaning stores, and many grocery stores. They managed successful florist shops, drugstores, and farms (owned by white citizens).

The exhibit contains a model of one of the internment camp barracks, with thin wooden walls, bunk beds, and a pot-bellied stove. Rows of these barracks stretched on flatland plagued by dust in the heat and mud in the rains. "We were disgusted enough just looking at the place, scorching under a 110-degree sun," wrote one resident. "Some people just broke down and bawled." Back in Seattle they had left behind their homes, their businesses, their identities. They had suffered daily humiliations like posters plastered around the city explaining "How to tell your friends from Japs." They were accused of disloyalty by race alone, and all Japanese-Americans on the West Coast with one-

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sixteenth "Japanese blood" or more were required to show up for transfer to the barbed-wire-enclosed camps. No one was officially charged with, much less convicted of, specific criminal acts. Most were American citizens.

There was no revolt against this injustice. As they moved from Seattle to a temporary holding camp and then on to an internment camp in Minidoka, Idaho, they followed their leaders, who repeatedly told them "*shikata ga nai*"—it cannot be helped. Yet before long the internees turned camp land into vegetable fields, and organized schools, medical care, and, of course, their own baseball teams. Then, improbably, the American military recruited young men from these officially suspect people to fight in the European theater of war in a Japanese-American regiment. Some of these soldiers plucked out of the detention camps in America helped liberate the death camps at Dachau.

In 1976 President Ford apologized officially to the Japanese-American community and rescinded Executive Order 9066. In 1983 Washington state made amends to the Japanese-Americans who were on the payroll in 1942 and lost their jobs when they were sent to the camps. A congressman from Seattle introduced the first bill asking redress from the federal government for the Japanese-Americans interned in World War II; in 1988 a bill was passed that promised each surviving internee reparations of $20,000.

Since then the Japanese-American community has become so integrated that the older generation worries about preserving its cultural identity. However, at the end of the exhibit there is a newspaper report on a 1991 poll showing "persisting hostility for the Pearl Harbor attack" across the country. In 1941 the fear of Japan quickly evolved into a persecution of Japanese-Americans. Now anti-Japanese sentiment is couched in economic terms. But the thought that it might evolve into something more virulent is never far from the minds of Seattle's Japanese-Americans.

ELIZABETH BECKER is the author of *America's Vietnam War* (Houghton Mifflin).

And Labour's demise.

SUBURBIA'S REVENGE

By Michael Ignatieff

There is a certain majesty in an election. It is much more than a verdict on politicians and policies. It is a moment when we learn the truth—sometimes bitter—about who we are. For many English liberals last week's election result was just such a moment of truth. It was much more than a political shock. It administered a moral, emotional, and cultural shock as well. Many millions of us woke up on Friday morning wondering what kind of society we were living in, forced finally to confront an ineluctable issue: Why did we fail to understand our own society?

Almost everyone who took part in the traveling election circus became so bewitched by the spin doctors and photo-ops of each campaign that we missed one fundamental reality: 1992 merely consolidates the great sea change election of 1979. Beginning then, the deep movements of social change—rising real incomes, diffusion of property ownership, the suburbanization of Britain—were all moving against Labour. Although the old working class, in declining manufacturing areas, in the council estates, in public-sector employment, remained Labourites, the new working class (owner-occupiers, non-unionized, private sector, and high tech) was moving in droves to the Tories. And the Labour middle class—professors, civil servants, teachers, union officials—was losing its prestige and political power to the new private-sector Tory-voting middle class—managers, entrepreneurs, businessmen.

Looking back, I can now see what I should have seen. Not just in Southeast new towns like Harlow and Stevenage, but south of Birmingham, down in the West country, in East Anglia, indeed everywhere the bus took me, the new suburban Britain flew by, the sprawling world of modest detached and semidetached affluence, flowing along the freeways, congealing around the supermarkets and hardware superstores. Thatcherism was there to see in double-glazed front windows, gleaming plastic conservatories on back extensions, burglar alarms over the garage doors, and new cars in the driveways. Conservatives knew how to reach the hearts and minds behind the lace curtains. One Tory candidate in the Northwest shrewdly observed in midcampaign that it usually takes a decade for a mortgage and a house to turn a Labour voter into a Tory. This, in a nutshell, is why it has been a Tory decade and threatens to become a Tory epoch.

The Tories won because they mastered the symbolic politics of suburban Britain. John Major kicked off his first major day of campaigning at a suburban hardware store. The metropolitan London media jibed at a prime minister caressing paint tins and stroking wallpaper samples. But reporters with chic inner London addresses missed the point. The store is the temple where cash is exchanged for the symbols of aspiration and achievement: bathroom tile, carpet, garden gnomes. John Major, son of a garden gnome manufacturer, understood this world so much better than those members of the high-minded, altruistic, personally ascetic urban middle class who ran the Labour campaign.

The crucial misunderstanding, of course, was over taxes. Labour economists studied the income distribution statistics and concluded that suburbia wouldn't mind if the taxes began to bite at around $38,000. But it is in the nature of suburban aspiration that you judge your interests not from where you are, but from where

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you hope you might get to. Especially in the Southeast, the Labour tax policy appeared to put a cap on the suburban dream.

In its inquest, Labour is bound to ask: How could we have lost in the middle of a recession? But this may well turn out to be the wrong question. Neil Kinnock got to the edge of the truth when he admitted that recessions don't turn people into revolutionaries. If anything, the recession worked to the Conservative's advantage. As one ruddy-faced Manchester businessman cheerfully confessed, "The Tories got us into this economic mess, and they're the only ones I trust to get us out of it." Major played to the defensive instincts of a worried suburbia and won handsomely.

But interests alone are not enough. Values count as well. Major's rhetoric of the classless society at ease with itself boxed in Labour as a party defending old class traditions and loyalties, and its conversion to the language of personal freedom was too hasty to sound convincing. As Major said in a speech in Perth a year ago, Labour always tells people what it is going to do for them. It never encourages them to do it for themselves. In other words, Labour's language of rights and entitlements lost the battle of values to the language of personal initiative. Its core value—redistributive justice—was decisively rejected.

More effective presentation cannot help Labour now. As it was, Labour played down the redistributive message nearly to the vanishing point. But it did not matter. Most voters clearly did not seem to mind that the rich have gotten richer under the Conservatives and the poor poorer. Apart from supporting the release of lower-income earners from taxes, voters clearly prefer tax policies that leave the rich in possession of what they have. Labour appealed to a bedrock of moral commitment to equity and they lost. Indeed, even among their own middle- and high-income supporters, one suspects there were more than a few who felt like the London ad man who told the newspapers last week: "I'm voting Labour and praying like hell the Tories get back."

Labour thus overestimated the altruism of its middle- and upper-income electorate and failed to alleviate the insecurities of its lower-class voters. Worse, it failed to spot a key contradiction between the asceticism of their fiscal and economic policy and the generosity of their social expenditure plans. On the one hand, it was committed to keeping the pound pegged to the deutsch mark and to joining the Economic and Monetary Union. On the other hand, it pushed a strongly redistributive social policy, requiring higher public spending and borrowing. Voters spotted the problem instantly: they were easily persuaded that Labour's sums simply did not add up.

Labour can progress only if it re-examines its position on the welfare state. It is merely preaching to the converted on socialized medicine. The party will not gain new adherents until it accepts the use of market pricing in allocating health care resources and addresses the question of rationing health service use to the neediest and most urgent cases. It also must rethink its commitment to universal entitlements. Its traditions lead it to abhor the means test, but means-tested and targeted programs are a better way to address poverty than blanket entitlements. Such policy revisions are the only way to square redistributive ambitions with available resources. The British election shows with pitiless clarity how little electoral appeal there is in the classic strategies for redistributing income within an economy in relative decline. Bill Clinton might take note.

MICHAEL IGNATIEFF is the author most recently of *Asya* (Knopf).

Why the United Way lost its head.

CHARITY CASE

By Joseph Finder

Heard the latest one about William Aramony, the ousted head of the United Way of America?... He took at the office. If ever there was a scandal for the '90s, this was it. The president of America's largest charity, William Aramony, was suddenly unmasked as a limo-riding, Concorde-flying tycoon. Not only has the reputation of the most successful charity head in the nation's history been tarnished, maybe irredeemably, but with all the sensationalism, the crux of the matter has been entirely unexamined: Is it really wrong for the head of the nation's most efficient multibillion-dollar charity to earn a big salary?

Now, I must point out in the interest of full disclosure that I'm distantly related to Aramony by marriage. I may be compromised, but I also had the opportunity to witness the development of a full-blown scandal from a rare vantage point.

Once *The Washington Post* broke the story of what it called Aramony's "lavish," "grandiose" lifestyle, his fate was sealed. His salary was $369,000—a large chunk of change by any measure—and it just plain looked bad. And the *Post*, *The New York Times*, and later the networks and everyone else chose to use the even more grating figure of $473,000, his salary plus his pension and health care benefits. What they failed to explain is that with a tenure of twenty-two years, he's the longest-serving head of a major charity, and that his salary and perks, far from being aberrant, are close to the norm among the big charities.

The United Way board hitherto had been delighted with Aramony's performance, giving him an average pay raise of 6 percent pay a year (although last year he chose

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not to take it). But early on, the board sensed that this was playing out as a personality-driven scandal. Far easier, after all, for the press to focus on one bad apple than the whole barrel, or the larger, more complex issue of executive compensation in charity. As the scandal grew, the board was faced with two choices: either downplay the thing—and risk further opprobrium—or scapegoat Aramony. They chose the latter option, in hopes of saving the charity, and imposed a gag order on him. Fortunately, no one in the press got hold of the confidential minutes of the September 12, 1990, United Way board meeting—chaired by John Akers—which proved that Akers supported Aramony's salary and pension package.

Then Akers brought in one of his IBM vice presidents, Kenneth Dam, as interim president to replace Aramony. Dam, it was announced, was serving without salary. No one mentioned that he continued to draw a six-figure salary from IBM. (Dam refused to tell me what it is.) Soon Dam was publicly castigating his predecessor: "Instead of leaving behind a legacy of important and lasting contributions to social service, he left behind a national problem."

The board rushed through an independent investigation strongly critical of Aramony, denying him access to its findings until after the report had been distributed to the media. In any case, most of the accusations were impossible to defend against in a trial by sound bite. Take the business of his riding around in a black stretch limousine. A Ford sedan with a driver isn't exactly a "limousine," but the United Way did hire a car and driver while Aramony and other top executives were in New York. As any executive who has ever had to get through a day of back-to-back appointments in New York can tell you, sometimes it's more efficient (and even cheaper) to have a car and driver at your disposal than standing around on Manhattan streetcorners trying to hail a cab. But try telling that to a TV audience of a few million fed-up New Yorkers who have to suffer the urine stench of the D train twice a day.

As for the business about Aramony having "diverted" United Way funds to buy a condo for himself in New York, it sounds downright sleazy, but there's a good explanation—which the United Way's report didn't offer. Instead of having the United Way pay the exorbitant rates of Manhattan hotels, Aramony—who went to New York on business regularly—had the organization rent a condo in the city, since it was cheaper. Soon it became clear that it made more fiscal sense to buy one.

Ted Koppel was right when he pointed out on "Nightline" that every time Aramony (or for that matter, any other United Way employee) did anything, it was money taken out of others' pockets. That's called "overhead," although charities don't like using the word. The truth is that under Aramony, the United Way has been the leanest national charity by far, with expenses of less than 14 percent per year; compare that with the American Cancer Society's 22 percent, the March of Dimes's 28 percent, or the Epilepsy Foundation of America's 33 percent.

It's not surprising, then, that throughout the Aramony affair the heads of the nation's other major charities decided to lie low, hoping the *Times* wouldn't call. Elizabeth Dole, for example, in her first salaried year as president of the American Red Cross, is making over $200,000. The head of the American Heart Association earns $246,000, and the head of the Muscular Dystrophy Association $285,000. All have been in office for far less time than Aramony. Nor do the heads of foundations live hand to mouth. The president of the Ford Foundation makes $422,000 a year; the head of the J. Paul Getty Trust makes $509,000. And of course executive compensation in the private sector is in another league entirely. As CEO of IBM, Akers took in $7.4 million in 1990. Obviously you weren't going to see him rushing to defend Aramony's salary.

For some reason, people seem to be more offended at the $369,000 that Aramony made for raising more than $3 billion last year than at the $3 million Lee Iacocca made last year for losing $795 million for Chrysler. Aramony has spent his entire thirty-eight-year career in the benevolence biz. Even the most vocal of his critics these days concede that he was the most successful charity head in American history. Twenty-two years ago, when he became president, the United Way was a loose, $700-million-a-year alliance of community chests. Aramony devised a system of corporate payroll deductions and secured corporate sponsorship (getting, for instance, the National Football League to donate $50 million worth of prime-time TV ads a year), along the way raising some $35 billion for the needy. He could easily have made ten or twenty times his yearly salary in the private sector.

It makes us queasy to think of charity leaders making a lot of money, because we instinctively believe that doing good shouldn't be materially rewarded—that making money contaminates the spirit of giving. The assumption is that if you want to help the poor, and your motives are "pure," you should be poor yourself. We're uncomfortable with the notion of do-gooders doing well; we're heirs to the Emersonian notion of the nobility of poverty.

Think of it, instead, as a purely pragmatic matter. American charities have grown into extraordinarily complex multibillion-dollar enterprises. No other country in the world relies on the nonprofit sector to provide human services to the extent we do. Especially since the Reagan-Bush cutbacks in social services, we depend on charities to do what our government won't. The time of the mendicant friars who took vows of poverty is long past.

Effective charity heads (and there aren't many of them) must possess the talents of a successful corporate CEO. It's not enough to want to do good; they need to be managers, spokesmen, schmoozers, innovators, even visionaries. Painful as it may be for some to contemplate, the last few decades have seen the professionalization of charities. It's not just for amateurs anymore.

JOSEPH FINDER, the author of *The Moscow Club* (Viking), writes frequently on international affairs.

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Should the West still help Yeltsin?

RUBLE-SHOOTERS

By Anders Åslund

On April 1 Helmut Kohl and George Bush announced a decision of historic dimensions. The West was to give Russia $24 billion of assistance this year in support of Russia's reform program. The announcement was made in the name of the G7, but in effect it applied to all twenty-four OECD countries. The timing, as recent events in Moscow amply demonstrate, could hardly have been better. On February 22 the Russian government and the IMF had signed an IMF shadow program, called a Memorandum on Economic Policies. On March 31 the IMF approved the reform program as outlined in the memorandum. But on April 6 the Russian government had to defend its economic program before the Russian Congress of People's Deputies, the enlarged Russian parliament. And the parliament was not so easy to assuage.

The Congress of People's Deputies was elected in March 1990 before full democratization had occurred in Russia, and it's therefore still packed with Communists. Because of its scant legitimacy, few of us thought it would dare jeopardize the government's economic strategy. But it did, insisting on indexing savings, doubling public salaries, and raising social spending and credits to loss-making industries. The Russian government had no option but to threaten to resign. In so doing, it also called the bluff of the Congress, which lacks a real mandate.

The likeliest result, in my view, is that Boris Yeltsin will put his proposal for a Russian constitution to a popular vote in June, the Congress will be abolished, and he will call for elections to the new parliament in the fall. Then a proper foundation of a democracy will have been laid. Presumably the current government of liberal economists would stay in office in the meantime. Throughout, the precondition of Western assistance should simply be viable economic policies.

There's a prior question, of course: Is it a good idea to start the transition to a free economy with massive state intervention in the form of substantial financing from foreign governments? The short answer is yes. First, the funds provided are predominantly loans made on commercial conditions, so there are few subsidies involved if all goes well. And private funds will only become truly available when there's confidence in the ruble. Central bank interventions are widely accepted to counter temporary declines on Western currency markets, and with the ruble stabilization fund, the principle is simply extended to the East.

The main purpose of the package is to instill confidence in the ruble, and so provide a lubricant for trade. Last year Soviet imports fell by 46 percent, because exports fell by 30 percent and private as well as public foreign finance was withdrawn. At the same time, Soviet enterprises and individuals fended for themselves, holding as much foreign currency as possible abroad and engineering a massive capital flight. The results have been multiple disasters: Russia ran out of currency reserves on December 11, 1991, and hasn't been able to pay even interest on its debt since then; the sharp fall in imports was one reason for the decline in national income of probably 15 percent in 1991; the standard of living has also dropped drastically.

The question today is essentially: How much economic disruption and suffering can the Russian people take? What the West needs to do is provide just enough aid so that the hardship is bearable and a more stable future arrives. This isn't wishful thinking. Russia has a grand potential for foreign trade. It had a foreign trade surplus last year of about $20 billion. With luck, it should be able to service its debts in two to three years. Unlike the Polish case, Russia does not need any debt relief, only debt rescheduling. Thus, self-interested Western banks should favor support, as some $70 billion in Soviet foreign loans are at risk.

What is the significance of a stabilization fund? By guaranteeing credit lines as extra currency reserves, the West gives credence to a currency. At the same time, it becomes possible to raise the exchange rate of a depressed currency and check inflation. Stabilization funds have been set up for Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, and they've worked well. The alternative doesn't bear thinking about. Last year Bulgaria tried to liberalize its economy without having gained the international support required for a stabilization fund. The exchange rate did stabilize, but at a very low level. Because of this, Bulgaria imported far more inflation than necessary, as prices and wages floated up to an international equilibrium level. In 1991 Bulgaria had an inflation of 600 percent. If a stabilization fund had been introduced in time, it would have been possible to keep inflation at a third of that.

In Russia the initial imbalances were far worse than in Bulgaria. A 600 percent inflation rate in 1992 would be regarded as a success. Without a stabilization fund and with liberalized energy prices, inflation might take off to stratospheric levels at the most crucial moment: this June. If the worst happens, the new price increases could arouse mass unrest. Only a stabilization fund could cap the ensuing inflation through a reasonably high, but defendable, exchange rate.

Yes, there are many other levers by which inflation can be controlled, notably fiscal, monetary, and income policies. But if it is not possible to peg the exchange

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rate, it will be even less possible politically to control the other levers. The Russian government does not believe it feasible to pursue any wage policy before the exchange rate has been pegged. If inflation skyrockets again, irresistible demands for the reintroduction of price controls are likely, however disastrous they would be. Shortages that have been successfully minimized would re-emerge.

Weirdly, the argument is frequently raised that Russia should not be given aid unless all the republics, or at least Ukraine, obtain equal treatment. Foreign loans are not a universal right. They are based on the merits of economic policies—and resources—of a particular country. Should Russia be punished because Ukraine is not thinking of economic reform as yet? On the contrary, aid to Russia for its reforms sets a precedent for countries such as the Baltic states, Belarus, and Ukraine: if real reforms are undertaken, the West will put up serious money. It may seem unfair that the Soviet successor state with the best foreign trade balance is receiving the first large foreign resources, but neither nature nor the market is very compassionate, and this aid is supposed to be market-friendly.

The current crisis in Moscow only reinforces the case that Western engagement in Russia's reforms is critical—and that currency stabilization should be the centerpiece of such engagement. But each republic should be judged on its own merits, and serious reform alone should attract serious government funding. The Western governments need to withstand the polemics of the semi-Communist Russian parliament and insist on the current government sticking to its guns. Anything less would be a blow both to the possibility of Russian economic success and to the resolve of Russia's first truly democratic government in generations.

ANDERS ÅSLUND, a professor at the Stockholm School of Economics, is an economic adviser to the Russian government.

Fujimori goes for my Mac.

MOUSE TRAP

By Gustavo Gorriti

LIMA

They came for me in the small hours of the morning. After the expected first ring of the doorbell—which sounded like a pistol shot to me—came the peremptory knocks and then kicks on the door. As I made a phone call, five or six men armed with assault rifles climbed over the garage and jumped into the garden. When I went out, unarmed, to confront them, one opened the garage door and about a dozen more men, all clad in civilian clothes, burst in with silencer-equipped H&K submachine guns. They had come to arrest me and my computer, bringing enough men and weapons for an Iwo Jima landing. Two trucks filled with uniformed soldiers had the place surrounded, while the plainclothesmen confronted a journalist, reinforced by his wife and two sleeping daughters, ages 6 and 1. (And two guard dogs, which I had confined in order to save their lives.)

I was taken by these poorly disguised army intelligence operatives in a Cherokee van with darkened windows to army central headquarters (my computer followed a different route). I was put in a small cell, and in the next hours I was interrogated only once. Two men who improbably presented themselves as computer specialists ordered me to provide the password to access the hard disk of my computer. When I refused, they hinted darkly at other methods to get the information they sought. But doubtless engaged in laborious and I hope fruitless computer-raping, they didn't come back, and I wasn't mistreated.

At the time I only knew that I had been kidnapped and was being held in a clandestine army detention facility, in one of those infamous *chupaderos* where so many events of horror have taken place after victims disappeared. Time passes in an excruciatingly slow way, and every booted footstep is a threat, every turn of the clumsy lock in the cell door a potential prologue to unspeakable trials.

Two hundred meters from my cell, Alberto Fujimori, Peru's president, was monitoring the progress of the coup he had plotted against the constitution he had sworn to defend. He had left Palacio de Gobierno with his family and was now living in the fortress-like army headquarters, surrounded by his coup advisers. Among them is Vladimiro Montesinos, a former army captain who was dishonorably expelled from the army in the '70s and is now regarded by most military officers as the most powerful individual in the Peruvian intelligence apparatus. He is known not least for his purges of military and police officers. Although he doesn't hold any official appointment, he works out of an office in the National Intelligence Service area and is protected by about thirty bodyguards. Like Manuel Noriega, he has had excellent relations with the CIA. He was doubtless the man responsible for my kidnapping. I had written an exposé about him back in 1983 for Lima's newsweekly *Caretas*. In 1991 he used all his leverage in the judiciary to prevent *Caretas* from updating the story. He now again feared an update, and apparently thought that the early hours of a coup offered the margin of impunity to shut up a troublesome journalist, and to peek into his computer.

Montesinos's military complement is General José Valdivia Dueñas, the army chief of staff, and one of the

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country's more notorious human rights violators. Accused of the Cayara massacre in May 1988, where twenty-eight civilians were assassinated by army units (he was counterinsurgency chief of the Ayacucho department at the time), he was exonerated largely thanks to Montesinos's advice, although the case is pending at the InterAmerican court. Montesinos sent many generals into retirement in order to make room for Valdivia.

Montesinos, Valdivia, and Valdivia's nominal boss, the commander in chief of the army, along with some other army officers, plotted and engineered the coup. The Cabinet ministers, a powerless, rather pathetic lot, were presented with the fact just a few minutes before. Only one, former Prime Minister Alfonso de los Heros, was principled enough to resign on the spot. It is evident now that Fujimori had decided to become a dictator long before the coup—perhaps even from the beginning of his regime. He engaged in a systematic pattern of confrontation with Congress, trying to discredit it and reach a deadlock.

But apparently the original plan was carried out ahead of schedule, after a bizarre scandal involving used clothes. Indeed, this may well go down in history as the used kimono or second-hand clothes coup. The event that triggered it was the public charge, made barely a few weeks before the coup by Peru's First Lady Susanna Higushi de Fujimori, that her in-laws (Fujimori's brother, sister, and sister-in-law) had misappropriated clothing donations from Japan intended for the poor: grabbing the best, selling the acceptable, and handing out to the people the "rags," suitable only for sweeping floors ("*estropajos*" was the eloquent Spanish word).

Fujimori, who had just come back from a successful visit to Japan, secluded his wife in the governmental palace. He himself disappeared from public view, and the next time he appeared was to proclaim himself a dictator. Susanna hasn't spoken a word in public since. A number of journalists are speculating that Fujimori's desperation to distract attention from accusations of corruption against him, his family, and his Cabinet played a part in his decision to launch the coup.

On the surface, it is hard to understand why Fujimori went ahead with it. His market-oriented reforms had stemmed hyperinflation, and, despite an acute recession, the economy had some prospects of recovery. The war against the Shining Path was going badly, but in February, after the Shining Path assassinated popular Villa El Salvador Vice Mayor Maria Elena Moyano, the outcry was so great that many previously uncommitted people began to grope for an answer to the problem of Sendero. For the first time since the war began, there was a distinct prospect of grass-roots organizations cooperating with the security forces.

A man with strong authoritarian leanings and with no real political party on his side, Fujimori ended up trying to use the army as his party, and the intelligence service as his politburo. He has radically changed his programs, kicked out former associates, and gotten away with it. He probably thought that this time wouldn't be an exception.

With foreign credit and assistance cut, and investment drying up fast, the fiscally sound economic policies won't last for long. If some decrees on "national security" are any guide, a strongly repressive regime will follow. All political parties will unify in opposition, but the real winner will be the Shining Path. The illegitimate nature of Fujimori's regime will be used by the Maoist rebels to claim legitimacy. Bloody repression will prove to be a fertile milieu for the growth of the Shining Path, which has survived and even emerged stronger from previous bloodbaths, as has been historically the case with well-organized Communist-led insurgencies.

The coup occurred at a time when the Shining Path was confronting serious growth problems, in the "united front" organizations that are indispensable to organize mass support. But in the absence of foreign aid, the Fujimori *golpista* regime will not be able to afford to be tough on the cocaine trade, and if the regime continues persecuting and repressing political parties, then it will effectively push some people toward the Shining Path recruiters. If anything, the coup sabotages the internal defense efforts that have cost Peruvians such a high price in blood.

The dictatorship will eventually crumble, but in the meantime it can do a lot of harm, both to Peru and to other fragile hemispheric democracies. I was freed from the military kidnapping because of early, sustained, intense national and international pressure on Fujimori. Pressure to bring back democracy should be no less energetic and uncompromising.

GUSTAVO GORRITI is a Peruvian journalist. The first volume of his three-volume work on the Shining Path guerrillas has been published in Peru.

The Democrats against Clinton.

LOSERS

By Sidney Blumenthal

This is the spring of the Democrats' discontent. Their nominee is apparent, but for some the game must go on. Their refusal to connect themselves to their candidate so that their party can begin to move as a body is not solely a reaction to Bill Clinton's disapproval ratings, which soared ten points during his wild ride in the New York fun

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house. The remaining resistance is about far more than Clinton's character; it is a revelation of certain character traits of the party he is struggling to lead.

Since his victory in New York, Clinton has been sequestered and voiceless. His doctor has ordered the loquacious candidate into speechlessness, and in the midst of Clinton's enforced silence some Democrats have trumpeted their doubts in an effort to preserve the mirage of a brokered convention. But the faltering hope against Clinton is not a last-minute expedience. Every Clinton recovery since New Hampshire has excited the alternative scenario-builders.

Before New York, according to a reliable source, Senator Lloyd Bentsen quietly passed the word to would-be supporters that he would be interested in waging a campaign on two conditions: first, Clinton must lose New York, and second, the nomination must be delivered to Bentsen at the convention. But Clinton won, and in any case if there were to be a smoke-filled room, who would determine who would be in it? Who would follow their dictate? But after New York the dream did not die. The next stop was the caucuses in Virginia, whose governor, Douglas Wilder, had dropped out of the presidential contest before it began but still retained a strong competitive instinct. He constantly sniped at Clinton; yet Clinton won overwhelmingly there. Now, on to Pennsylvania. "We're not making this up," Governor Robert Casey insisted to reporters about "unease" with the candidate, flourishing the latest polls. "It's now early April and we have to go to July, so just stay loose." But despite Casey's hostile neutrality, there is every sign that Clinton will score a big win in the state.

Meanwhile, the Democratic National Committee has rallied to the relentless logic of Clinton. Those in the party who are not following its lead are commonly called the "get-a-diaper crowd." But incontinence is a form of indiscipline, however egregious, that may be involuntary; and it is often symptomatic of deeper maladies.

In Washington much of the congressional Democratic Party and those arrayed around it have been resentful of the campaign spectacle. Behind their panic about Clinton lies panic about themselves. As they suffer from a host of House scandals, they see Clinton dragging a chain of scandals their way. Already many Democrats have announced they will not seek re-election, some having had their political careers unbalanced by their check-kiting at the House Bank. Their nervousness has made them jumpy at the slightest political noise. "If you drop a coffee cup over there, fifty of them will retire," cracked a DNC official. But some, like Senators Tim Wirth and Kent Conrad, are fleeing out of sheer frustration. Implicit in their decisions is the belief that the present paralysis will continue indefinitely.

For more than a generation, since Richard Nixon won the White House in 1968 (with the exception of the troubled interregnum of Jimmy Carter), divided government has been the rule. Since Ronald Reagan, insolvency has silted into the interstices of the checks and balances. Consequently, the politics of the congressional Democrats over the decades has become rote. They have sought merely to preserve their incumbency, and along the way they have lost much of the sense of belonging to a presidential party. Yet by its nature, the modern Democratic Party requires the executive to serve as the focus of national action, just as the Republican Party needs to control the executive to block it. Without control of the White House, the Democratic identity has become static. From the vantage point of the Hill, the assessment of Democratic presidential candidates is no longer mainly about winning the executive, but about maintaining power in Congress against a permanent Republican president. Both Clinton's negatives and his positives introduce threatening elements of uncertainty. If he loses, congressional Democrats might be dragged down too. And if he wins, their entrenched power would be reduced. Most are mentally trying to weigh their fears against the chance to make public policy again, a possibility their hard-bitten experience convinces them is largely wishful thinking.

After New York more than a dozen congressmen gathered in the office of Don Edwards of California to worry about Clinton. The meeting, like that of any therapy group, came to no resolution; it was just an unburdening of anxiety. One representative who has announced his retirement out of frustration, Dennis Eckart of Ohio, has since been playing the role of Chicken Little, as though his quitting has liberated him as a truth-teller.

For many of the barons of Congress, the presidential selection process is mystifying and abhorrent. The dream of the brokered convention is a way for these master politicians to fend off coping with a process they do not understand. Their paralysis has been consistent in their failure to coalesce behind an anti-Clinton candidacy. They have not comprehended how delegates are won, which means that they have not grasped that if Clinton were not the nominee, he would be uniquely influential in dictating who the replacement nominee might be. Moreover, they have not understood that anyone who surfaces will be subject to the same savage inquisition by the press and the Republican negative campaign machine that Clinton has met. From the beginning, the superdelegates in Congress could have stepped into the nominating process as a decisive force; yet, even now, the vast majority hold themselves in reserve for options that don't exist.

The emergence of a victor in the Democratic primaries, in the meantime, has been the signal for continuing self-defeating behavior by some of the losers. Failed individual candidates have deluded themselves into thinking they represent huge, enduring movements organized around great principles. Thus Paul Tsongas speaks about "the message" as if it were a holy presence, so divine it can't be called by

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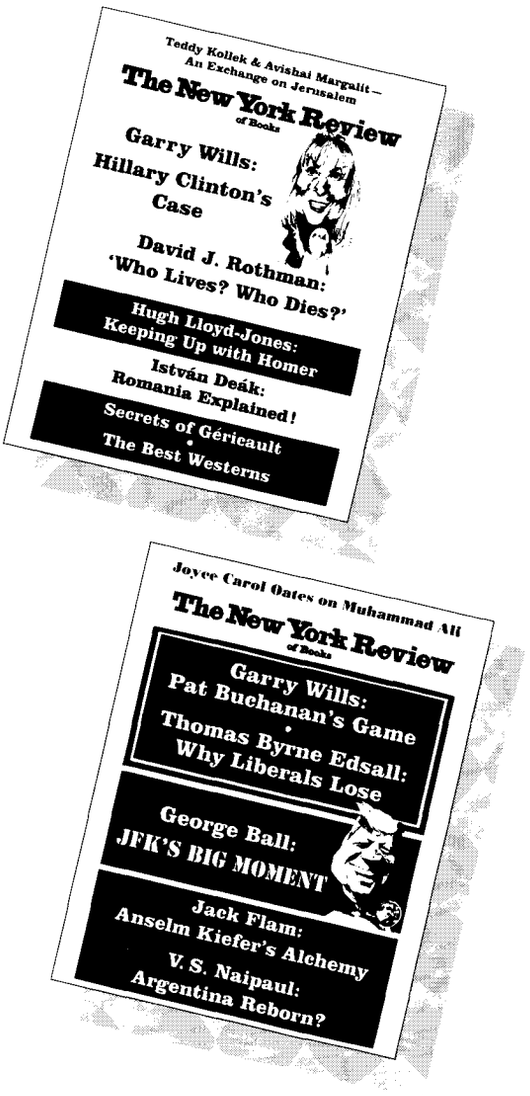

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its name. Bob Kerrey, in lieu of endorsing, has drifted off to contract with a literary agent to float his proposal to write a book about his unresolved feelings about the Vietnam War. Jerry Brown, like the last Japanese soldier, will not surrender, though his war is over. One day he preaches conciliation, the next he tries to relive the glory days of New York, where he finished third. After ABC News's "report" on Brown's alleged tolerance of drug use in his home when he was governor—journalism performed in the East German style of reliance upon unidentified stool pigeons—Clinton expressed solidarity with his opponent, a gesture for which Brown had no use. With no mathematical chance, he is desperate to put himself back into the equation.

A whole other category of holdout includes the moneymen, consultants, and advisers who feel they have a bad market position with the Clinton campaign, or who are speculating on a candidate with whom they may have a good relationship in 1996. Perhaps the most prominent of these characters is Nate Landau, a big donor who, after raising large sums for Walter Mondale in 1984, organized a group of financial angels called Impac. In this round, Impac chose to bet on Tom Harkin. When he lost, Landau tried to sustain influence by becoming a majordomo in the Anybody But Clinton movement. Unfortunately, Landau has not found Somebody to be Anybody. By contrast, Harkin, ever the true party man, has been a model of support for Clinton, endorsing and campaigning.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Though the Democrats may lack Harkin's spirit, they will eventually come along. Clinton's gains, said Mark Steitz, spokesman for the DNC, will be "constant, steady, and formidable, much like in the primaries." Almost all of organized labor, which despises Bush, has decided it will back Clinton. With labor behind Clinton, the brokered convention becomes even more of a fantasy, and the reverie of brokerage was further dispelled when Dick Gephardt, the House majority leader and fantasy-candidate for the Hill caucus, endorsed Clinton.

The endorsement issue foreshadows the issue of divided government. Although Bush will rail against Congress, it appears unlikely that it will turn Republican. The voters must therefore face the question of whether they wish to continue with the current impasse. Clinton must make the case for a united government that avoids the pitfall of identifying himself as the passive instrument of the legislative branch. Clinton must pledge that he will clean up the mess in Washington by taking Congress by the hand. The reluctance of the fretful congressional Democrats to rush to his side has only helped him establish the distance he needs in dealing with them as a political factor. He must not run to be prime minister, but president.

But Bush, as he has made clear, will attempt to make Congress and a government unified by the Democrats one of his main themes. Against this prospect, he will position himself as the good government leader, a disinterested figure of unimpeachable ethics. Perhaps this positioning will succeed in escaping the emptiness of his policy-making. But already 57 percent believe Bush's efforts to blame Congress are "an excuse for not doing his job," according to a *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll. For Clinton, then, Bush's Congress-bashing must be seized as an opportunity to illustrate his retreat into alibi—an avoidance and denial of his responsibility.

While Clinton's advisers meet in executive session to plot the renovation of his image, they ought to account for the element of time. The rhythm of the campaign will help play into Clinton's hands. In the primary context, when Clinton haphazardly turned his attention to Bush, he opened himself as the frontrunner to the assault of being the establishment candidate from below. Soon the rules will change. By virtue of being in the ring alone with Bush, the lighting on Clinton will alter and he will be seen as the insurgent challenger. Clinton's foreign policy speech in New York provided the sterling example of the effect of engaging Bush on substantive issues. Bush, ever reactive, felt compelled to respond, forcing a comparison with Clinton that uplifted him: Clinton suddenly appeared presidential.

His situation is hardly immobile, like Congress's. He is in something like the position of Ann Richards, who, in 1990 in Texas, emerged from the Democratic primary with a higher disapproval rating than Clinton's today, having been accused of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, but who went on to win by making the election turn on her definition of her opponent. It should also

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not be forgotten that at about this point in the process in 1980, Reagan's negative ratings were about equal to Clinton's, but that he overcame them by sharply attacking Carter while broadly laying out a new direction. The image that Reagan filled out was that of the strong president. His ideological particulars, which actually frightened most of the public, were less significant than his instinctive sense of the executive office.

In the campaign, two images of Clinton have emerged. One is the lawyerly "Slick Willie"—*Time*'s negative cover. The other is a candidate who perseveres, directly confronts his opponents, doesn't hold himself aloof from the conflict. Clinton has also displayed a ferocious capacity for negative campaigning, cruelly and coolly eviscerating both Tsongas and Brown. His setbacks have only fueled his natural aggression. The lineaments of his reconstructed persona are to be found in the latter image.

And now Clinton has something he didn't have before: the Democratic nomination. His main task is to force the campaign for the presidency to be, in fact, about the presidency. His every impulse must be to close in on Bush. (Bush, indeed, has shown a remarkable inability to cope with real opposition, and he has lost both times he faced it: to Bentsen and to Reagan.) But mere words will not transform the current image of Clinton. One set speech—or two or three—will not do it. Personal statements about oneself are limited in self-definition. The proof will come in the event. Character, as F. Scott Fitzgerald suggested, is action. •

Why Clinton can't win.

LOSER

By Fred Barnes

Vin Weber, the Republican representative from Minnesota, remembers the exact moment he concluded Bill Clinton will never become president. It was February 6, the day *The Wall Street Journal* reported new evidence that Clinton had dodged the draft in 1969. This was two weeks after Gennifer Flowers, an Arkansas state employee, went public with the claim that she'd been Clinton's extramarital lover for a dozen years. Weber saw Representative Bob Dornan of California soon after reading the *Journal* story. "Bob, today's the end of the Clinton campaign," he said. Weber exaggerated, but his point was that Clinton is unelectable. "I still believe this," Weber says.

Weber's view is hardly shocking (he's a supporter of President Bush). Republican strategists, inside and outside the Bush camp, mostly agree with him. "This guy's damaged goods," Republican national chairman Rich Bond says of Clinton. What's surprising is that many Democratic politicians and consultants also agree. Tubby Harrison, the pollster for Paul Tsongas this year and Michael Dukakis in 1988, has called Clinton "a dead stone loser" in the fall. "Ordinarily with a sick economy and a president with a 39 to 40 percent approval rating, you'd expect a Democratic candidate to be substantially ahead," Harrison says. When Dukakis clinched the nomination in the spring of 1988, he jumped in front of Bush in public opinion polls. Clinton trails Bush (47 percent to 41 percent in a recent Gallup poll, for instance). And he's yet to face the potent Republican campaign machine whose orchestrated attacks crushed Dukakis.

Harrison says publicly what other Democrats concede privately. One Democratic consultant insists that discussing Clinton's prospects against Bush is "like engaging in necrophilia." Every party figure he's talked to, the consultant says, "thinks it's going to be a disaster." Why? Because Clinton has problems in four separate areas: the character issue, voter turnout, the South, and foreign policy. These problems are all the more troublesome because there's no clear way to overcome them.

Character. The negative poll numbers are staggering, and they've dogged Clinton since the New Hampshire primary in February. In a KRC survey, only 9 percent of New Hampshire Democrats identified Clinton as the candidate with the moral values and strength of character they'd like to see in the next president. Post-New Hampshire, Clinton strategists theorized that qualms about Clinton's character would dissolve as voters got to see him more and know him better. It hasn't worked out that way. Exit polling in the Connecticut primary on March 24 found that 48 percent of Democratic voters don't believe Clinton has the honesty and integrity to be president. Two weeks later, in the New York primary, 46 percent of Democrats said the same. The *Time*/CNN poll, conducted nationally on April 9, had more bad news. Not only did 53 percent say Clinton isn't trustworthy enough to be president, 62 percent said they would not be proud to have him lead the country.

The character issue, Harrison says, might be easy to deal with if it were the result of one thing. "But it's a bunch of things that have accumulated." These include Flowers, the draft, marijuana use, minor ethical flaps involving Clinton as governor of Arkansas, and Clinton's sometimes evasive response to all these issues. Richard Wirthlin, a pollster who worked for President Reagan, says the problem is compounded because voters don't remember their source of information about Clinton or exact details. "They're left with a residual image that Clinton doesn't have the honesty and integrity to be president," says Wirthlin. "They remember the impression." And it's devastating for Clinton's chances against Bush. "A candidate can't get on the playing field unless he pays the ticket of honesty and integrity," Wirthlin adds. If voters don't trust Clinton,

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they'll be oblivious to leadership qualities—vision, strength, compassion—he might have. And though many Americans crave change, they won't feel comfortable with a candidate of change they don't trust, Wirthlin argues.

Combating the character issue is difficult. "Once Clinton's negatives are established and allowed to grow deeper and deeper, they're almost impossible to blow away," says a Democratic strategist. Confronting the problem specifically will remind voters of what bothered them in the first place. That will only reinforce the problem. A tack considered by the Clinton campaign is for friends to give testimonials about Clinton's integrity. That might help, but not much. Another option is to attempt through sharp attacks and negative TV ads to drive up voters' doubts about Bush's basic character. The problem with that, a Democratic consultant says, is "you'll never convince the American people that George Bush is not decent and honorable." Still another option is for Clinton to "inoculate" himself against GOP character attacks by mentioning all the things Republicans may bring up. But that will work only if Clinton can deny the charges. Joe Klein of *New York* suggests that Clinton give a Checkers-like speech to the nation. But what should he say? Should he confess to things he's earlier denied?

Turnout. "The drop in turnout has to terrify the Democrats," said Paul Tsongas when he declined April 9 to jump back into the presidential race. "The Democratic Party cannot be a very happy camp today." It isn't. Clinton won a majority of the primaries, but not because he was magnet for voters. Turnout fell in ten states. Examples: Mississippi (off 47 percent from 1988), Tennessee (46), New York (39), Louisiana (35), Georgia (31), Connecticut (30), Wisconsin (29). Turnout rose in six states, but four of these were strong Tsongas states. Overall Democratic turnout dropped 18 percent, while Republican turnout decreased 4 percent.

On closer examination, the turnout picture gets worse for Clinton. In Georgia he was credited with putting together what Democratic national chairman Ron Brown calls the "K-Mart coalition" of blacks and lower-income whites. But it was a shrunken coalition, chiefly party activists unrepresentative of the state, says Georgia Secretary of State Max Cleland, a Democrat who backed Senator Bob Kerrey in the presidential race. "Clinton won from the most narrow Democratic base in the primary since we've been holding presidential primaries and Bush won from the broadest base," according to Cleland. For the first time, Republicans drew as many primary voters as Democrats, including a majority of the white vote. In South Carolina, Republicans outdrew Democrats, getting roughly 70 percent of the white vote. In Mississippi, Republicans more than doubled the turnout in last year's gubernatorial primary. "Based on what I'm seeing, the commitment of the Republican vote is still there," says Warren Tompkins, the Bush campaign's Southern coordinator.

There's no direct correlation between turnout in the primaries and in the general election. But primary turnout is at least a leading indicator. Black turnout was down everywhere—in New York from 400,000 in 1988 to 150,000 this year. Since blacks are the most reliable Democratic voting bloc, this portends trouble for Clinton. Stanley Greenberg, Clinton's pollster, says he expects relatively high black turnout in November, but I can't imagine how Clinton will lure them in the fall when he couldn't in the spring. Clinton has not demonstrated "a mobilizing ability," says Curtis Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate. Gans says there are three conditions conducive to a jacked-up turnout this fall: a surge of positive feelings toward government, a big issue, and a recession. Only a recession seems possible now, and it's not likely, given the signs of economic recovery. Gans says turnout may dip below 50 percent in November. "In this election, a lower turnout probably favors Bush," he says. I'd say definitely favors Bush

The South. One of Clinton's supposed assets is that as a Southerner he'll shatter the GOP's presidential lock on the South. Dream on. Clinton might have been able to pick off a handful of Southern states (Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, Louisiana) before the adultery and draft issues hit him, but now his chances are slim to none. "Maybe Arkansas, but that's about it right now," says political scientist Merle Black. He and his brother Earl are authors of a new book, *The Vital South,* that outlines how Republicans seized the South as their base in presidential elections. This base, which has 54 percent of the electoral votes needed to win the presidency in 1992, is critical to Republican ascendancy.

To offset it, Clinton needs a strong black turnout and a sizable white vote. Neither seems likely now. Democrat Glen Browder, a political scientist before he was elected to the House in 1986 from Alabama, says blacks "won't turn out in the general election because they haven't been energized by Jesse Jackson." That means Clinton needs a bigger vote from white swing voters. Many of them are willing to vote for a Democrat, especially a Southern Democrat, and were drifting to Clinton—until the character issue struck. The draft issue has particular potency in the South. Browder says Clinton "will lose some votes because of it." Cleland says, "The staircases the Clinton campaign has to climb get steeper and steeper." Clinton's support comes from inner cities and rural areas, where turnout was down and excitement low. "But you can count on turnout being gangbusters in the suburbs"—Bush country—he says.

Foreign policy. This is Bush's strength, but it didn't help him in the primaries. His TV spots touting Desert Storm fell flat. There's a reason for that. Presidential campaigns have a rhythm all their own. Voters don't think about choosing a commander in chief during the primaries. But they do in late October and early November, just before voting in the general election. "It'll cause Clinton to lose a few percentage points," says Bush pollster Fred Steeper. You can imagine the TV ads

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contrasting Bush's World War II record, experience in foreign affairs, and leadership in Desert Storm with Clinton's lack of experience and alleged draft dodging. Republican consultants are adept at exploiting the commander-in-chief issue. In 1988 Roger Ailes produced an ad showing Dukakis riding in a tank, looking silly. The ad mocked the notion of Dukakis as commander in chief. It was devastating.

Is there a way Clinton might pull through? Yes, but don't count on it. Clinton advisers note that Bush's negatives are high too, implying that Clinton is no worse off than Bush. But Bush's low approval rating is based on his performance as president. So long as the economy improves, his rating will rise. Clinton's negatives are personal and harder to uproot. Clinton aides point also to Bush's success in 1988 in shedding his wimp image. But Bush was viewed more favorably once he became a presidential nominee—his wimp problem was largely a product of being vice president (a veep isn't his own man). Clinton doesn't have this luxury. Nor can he face his detractors the way John Kennedy did in 1960, when he appeared before Protestant ministers in Houston. Who would Clinton confront? Gennifer Flowers? Opal Ellis, the 84-year-old draft official who says Clinton misled his local draft board?

There are two lifelines for Clinton. One is for the campaign to turn inexplicably into a riveting issues debate between Clinton and Bush. Clinton fared best in the primaries when engaged with Tsongas in a debate of economic principles. Then voter concern about his character dipped. If Clinton finds a strong, single issue, he might "get the focus off personality and character," says Wirthlin, the GOP pollster. It would have to be an economic issue more sweeping than the middle-class tax cut Clinton championed in the primaries. But if the economy slips into recession again, Clinton may stumble onto the big issue he needs. The other lifeline is a White House scandal. That would put Clinton's character problem in a different context. Absent a scandal or economic collapse, Clinton's a goner. •

Roger Coleman vs. William Rehnquist.

DEAD END

By John Tucker

On a March night in 1981 in the hardscrabble coal town of Grundy, Virginia, Brad McCoy returned home to find his wife, Wanda Fay, raped and murdered, her throat cut so deep that her head was nearly severed from her still warm body. Eleven years later Wanda McCoy's brother-in-law, Roger Coleman, waits in the Virginia State Penitentiary to be executed for her murder. There is a good chance the execution will take place on May 20, as scheduled. There is also a good chance that Coleman is innocent. In the legal atmosphere created by the Rehnquist Supreme Court, however, he may never get a chance to prove it.

From the time he joined the Court, William Rehnquist has campaigned to limit the scope of habeas corpus, and as the Court has changed, his efforts have borne fruit. Over the past decade the Court has chipped away at access to habeas corpus, accepting state procedural arguments it once rejected, limiting the right to file successive writs as new facts or theories emerge, and holding that even the most compelling arguments may be waived if they are not raised at the first opportunity. There are few more compelling arguments against this trend in this judicial reasoning than the case of the bizarre, chilling—and still mysterious—murder of Wanda McCoy.

From the discovery of McCoy's body, the investigation of her murder was less an inquiry into who was responsible than an effort to find evidence to convict Roger Coleman. There were few compelling facts pointing to Coleman's involvement, but police believed he was one of the few people McCoy would have admitted into her house at night. More important, four years earlier Coleman had been convicted of attempted sexual assault.

At first, evidence against Coleman was hard to come by. No one could place him at the scene of the crime, and four independent witnesses corroborated his near-perfect alibi. However, by discounting the testimony of one witness and ignoring the medical examiner's original estimate of the time of death, there was a period of fifteen or twenty minutes in which Coleman could have entered the house, struggled with the victim, dragged her into a spare bedroom, removed her clothes, raped her, cut her throat, stabbed her twice after she was dead, and made his escape undetected through the front (and only) door before Mr. McCoy came home to discover his wife's body.

continued on page 24

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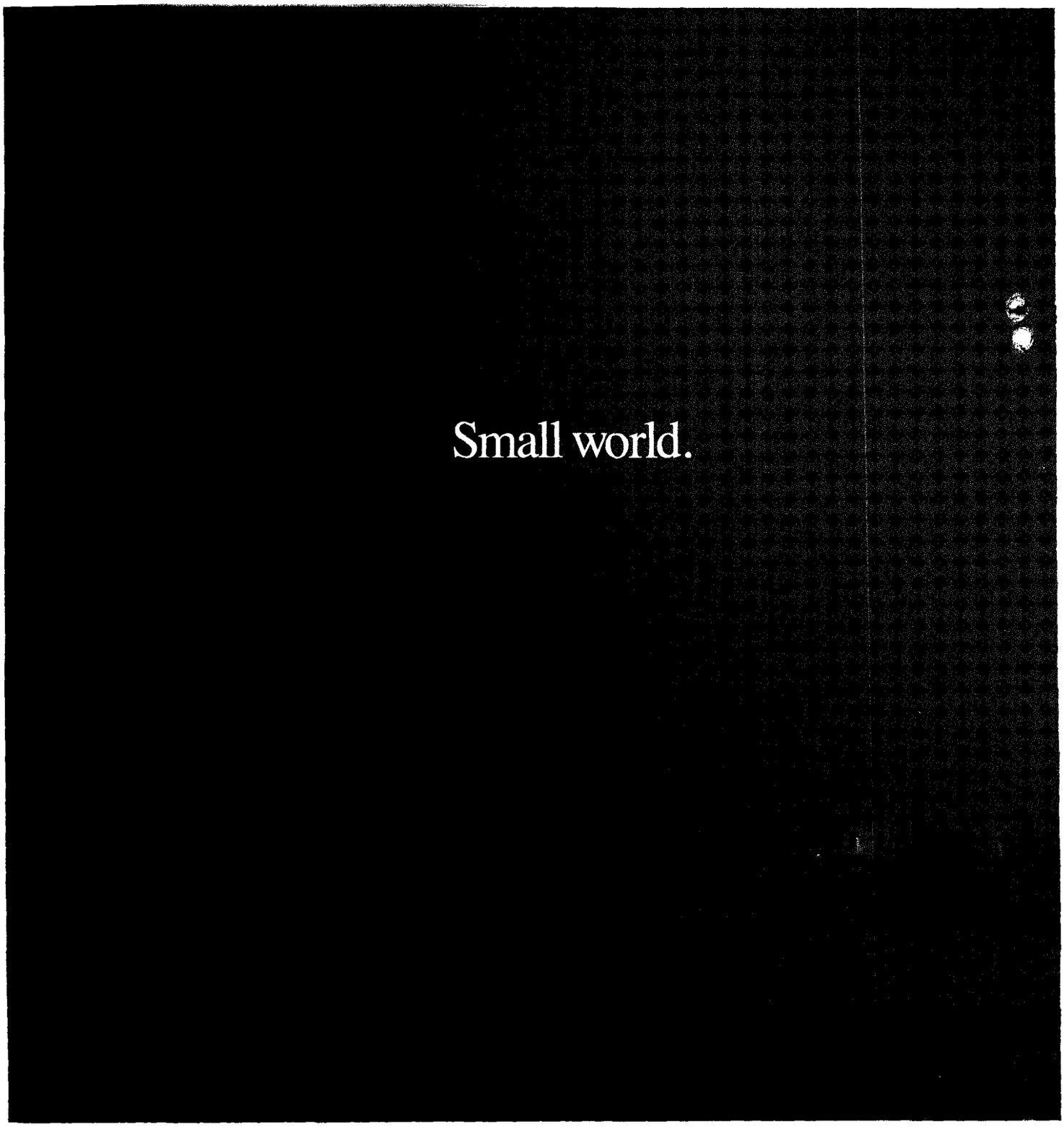

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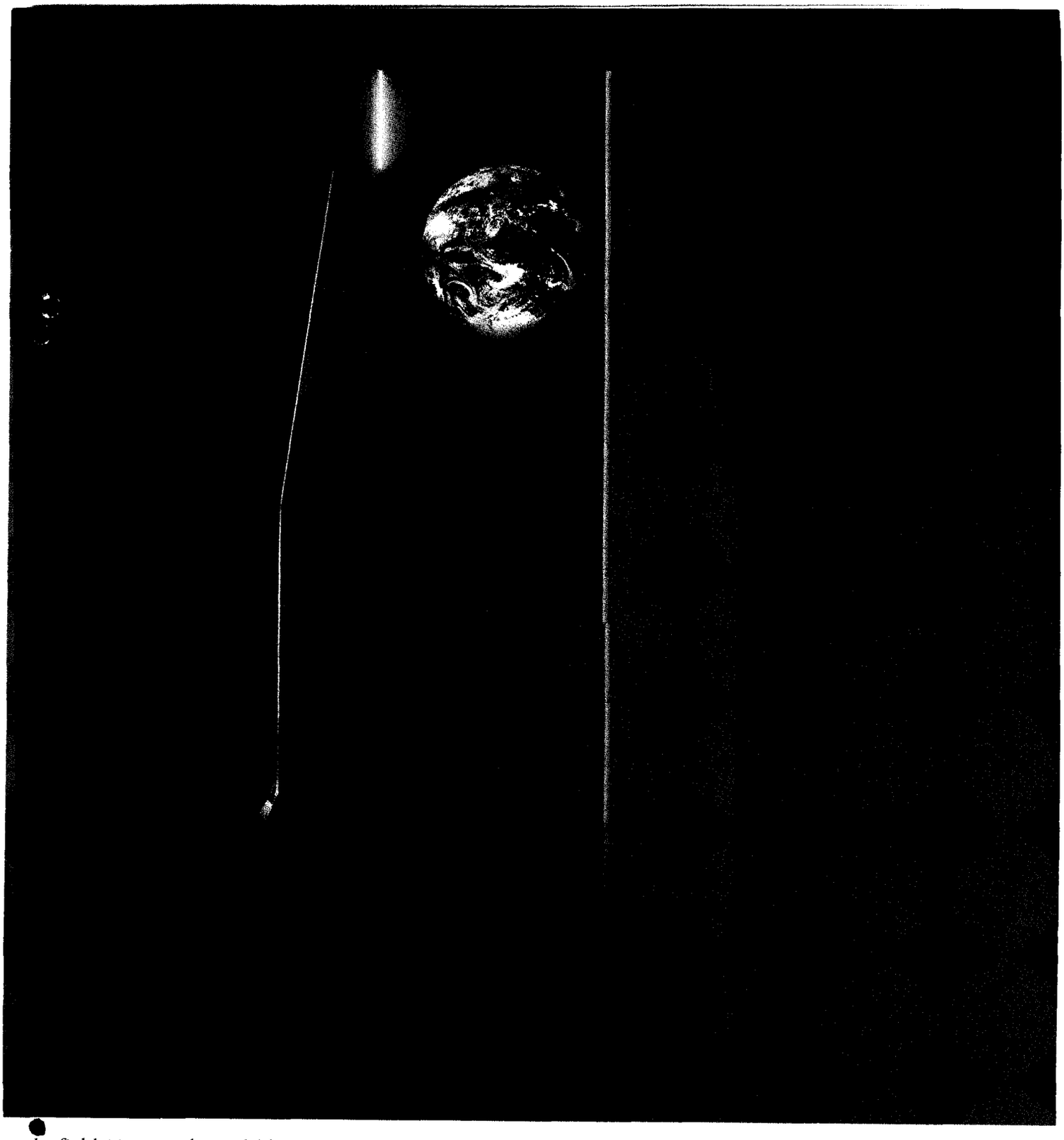

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It was a thin reed, but when forensic tests indicated that sperm found in the victim's vagina came from someone with blood type B (a type shared by Coleman and about 13 percent of the population), some small spots of blood on Coleman's pants were reported to be type O (the same as the victim and about 45 percent of the population), and two pubic hairs found on the victim were declared "consistent" with Coleman's, the authorities charged him with capital murder. Represented by appointed lawyers who had never defended a murder case, Coleman was found guilty and sentenced to death.

The web of evidence that led to Coleman's conviction and death sentence has begun to come apart since his trial. If, as mineworker Phillip Van Dyke testified, he spoke with Coleman miles from the murder scene at about 10:30 p.m., there was no time at all for Coleman to have committed the crime before Mr. McCoy arrived home. At trial the prosecutor argued that Van Dyke was guessing about when his conversation with Coleman ended. However, the possibility that Van Dyke was mistaken was largely eliminated by a time card showing that he had punched in at the mine at 10:41 p.m., exactly what you would expect if, as he testified, Van Dyke left Coleman at 10:30, went directly to his job, changed clothes, and punched in. The prosecutor had Van Dyke's time card at the time of trial, but it was not shown to the jury.

Other elements of the state's case are disintegrating as well. According to the prosecution, the major reason Coleman was a suspect is that he was related to Wanda McCoy and there was no sign of forced entry. What the prosecution did not reveal is that during the investigation of the crime scene the police found a pry mark on the McCoys' doorjamb. Close by the pry mark police found and lifted a latent fingerprint. No report of the state's effort to identify the fingerprint has been produced. If it were Coleman's, the fingerprint would have been introduced at trial with great fanfare.

The most significant evidence that Coleman was wrongly convicted, however, emerged after Jim McCloskey, a nationally known investigator, agreed to study the case in 1988, and Kathleen Behan, a young lawyer at Arnold and Porter, was assigned to it in 1990. McCloskey began his investigation with a visit to Grundy in the spring of 1988. It was McCloskey who uncovered the police report mentioning the pry mark and fingerprint. He also scoured the area for witnesses, turning up a good deal of new information useful to Coleman's defense, including a witness who says that on the night of the murder Coleman's truck was not parked where it had to have been under the state's theory. But McCloskey hit the jackpot when he interviewed Goldie Owens and Mrs. Bobby Ramey. Owens is the mother-in-law of Roger Matney, a convicted felon who testified that Coleman confessed to him when they were cellmates. After telling his story, Matney was released from the remainder of a four-year prison sentence. Owens swears that Matney later told her his testimony was false. Matney denies it.

The Ramey home sits a few yards above the house where Brad and Wanda McCoy lived, overlooking it. When McCloskey knocked on the door in 1988 and explained that he was looking for information about the murder, Mr. and Mrs. Ramey, their daughter, and one of their sons, Donnie, were home. With the rest of the family chiming in from time to time, Mrs. Ramey told a story that seemed odd. Yes, she said, she remembered the night vividly. Donnie and his brother Michael had gone out to the movies. When they got home about 9:45, Donnie was angry because "that damn Roger Coleman's truck is parked in my parking space." Then Michael went outside to bring in the laundry but quickly returned and grabbed a fireplace poker, shouting that a man was lurking under the porch. He ran back out, but the man was gone.

Jim McCloskey was puzzled, but he knew two things for sure. One was that Coleman's truck was not parked in Donnie Ramey's parking space at 9:45—it was undisputed that he was miles away at that time. The other was that the Rameys had not told their story to the police—if they had, it would have been used at trial to put Coleman at the scene of the crime. And yet it seemed equally unlikely that the Rameys would not have told their story to the police if it happened. McCloskey was convinced the Rameys were lying—but why?

In 1990, two years after the Rameys talked to McCloskey, Kitty Behan received an anonymous report that someone had admitted to McCoy's murder, and that the same person had tried to rape several other women in the Grundy area. Ultimately three women came forward and gave sworn affidavits that Donnie Ramey had sexually assaulted them. (Ramey has not been charged in connection with any of these alleged assaults). One of the women, Teresa Horn, also swore that when she screamed and tried to fight Ramey off, he told her to "shut up, or I'll do you like I did that woman on Slate Creek." Wanda McCoy lived on Slate Creek.

Two years ago the swabs that were taken from McCoy's vagina were submitted to an expert to see whether more sophisticated testing could identify or eliminate Coleman as the source of the sperm that was found. Like almost everything in this case, the results were surprising. Though it was not possible to obtain a DNA "fingerprint" identifying the source of the sperm, the expert did isolate three blood components known as "alleles." The bad news for Coleman is that two of them were the same as his, and thus he could not be eliminated as the source of the sperm. Indeed, the state claims the test results make it even more likely that he was the source. The good news is that there are only two alleles in any one person's blood, so the sperm found in McCoy's vagina came from at least two people, not just one.

Suddenly a lot of things began to make sense. McCloskey always believed there were two people involved in the crime based on crime scene pho-

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tographs. Then too, there was sperm in McCoy's rectum as well as her vagina, indicating she was both raped and sodomized, an unlikely feat for one man within the brief period when the crime had to have occurred. There was also verifiable evidence that Coleman left home that night expecting to go to work; was alone when he left work after his shift was canceled; was alone when he met and talked to Van Dyke; and was alone when he was seen a few minutes before the state claims he went to the scene of the murder.

As McCloskey puts it, "If you ask why Roger would rape and murder his wife's sister, it doesn't make sense; and if you ask how he had time to commit the crime, I don't think he did; but if you ask how Roger Coleman, after he was alone all night, recruited someone out of the clear blue sky to help rape and murder his sister-in-law, I say it's impossible." McCloskey believes Donnie Ramey and someone else killed McCoy and the Ramey family knows it. That's why they made up the story about Coleman's truck and the man under the porch. Ramey denies it and has backed up his denial with an identification card that claims his blood type is A.

The next bizarre twist in the story came earlier this year, on Thursday, March 5. That day Teresa Horn met with Behan and gave an interview to a local television station about her claim that Donnie Ramey had tried to rape her and confessed to the murder of Wanda McCoy. The next day her boyfriend returned home in the late afternoon and found Teresa unconscious. Two hours later she was pronounced dead. Preliminarily the doctors think she died of an overdose of some drug—whether self-inflicted or not may never be known.

At first it seemed that Coleman's last chance to survive had been buried with Horn, but the curious circumstances of her death renewed public concern that someone other than Coleman, someone still at large, may have killed McCoy. More important, within a week of Horn's death two new witnesses reportedly told friends that Donnie Ramey had admitted involvement in the McCoy murder. Behan and McCloskey are now checking out their stories in hopes they will be able to provide affidavits the way Horn did.

Is Roger Coleman innocent? With the legal and investigative resources now available, an evidentiary hearing before an impartial court should reveal the truth. Except for one problem—there may not be any hearing. For most of this century courts have examined death penalty cases more carefully than others and created a system of appeals that would provide a dispassionate forum for reviewing convictions often obtained by zealous authorities in the charged atmosphere of a brutal murder. This effort to avoid the irreversible tragedy of executing an innocent defendant has had two opposing effects on the debate over the death penalty in America. On one hand the effort to avoid mistakes inevitably causes long delays between conviction and execution, a result that death penalty advocates bitterly deplore. On the other hand this same care makes it far less likely that an innocent person will be executed before the truth is discovered, thus allowing death penalty advocates to minimize their opponents' most powerful argument, the possibility of mistake.

Thus, although there are many examples of innocent men and women convicted of capital crimes, some of whom came within a few hours of execution, there have been few if any executions of the factually innocent because the Warren Court provided state criminal defendants with realistic access to federal review by writ of habeas corpus. That record, however, is about to change dramatically. The Rehnquist Court's reluctance to interfere with state court decisions and its acceptance of state procedural arguments in a manner eschewed by its predecessors mean that a case like Coleman's is particularly vulnerable.

Last summer Coleman fell victim to the Court's increasingly skeptical approach to habeas corpus. Years ago one of his appointed lawyers counted the time for filing a document from the date an order was entered by a clerk instead of the date it was signed by a judge. From that day on, Coleman's case has proceeded with the certainty of a Kafka story. The Virginia Supreme Court held that the document was filed one day late, and therefore refused to consider Coleman's appeal on its merits. Next, Coleman filed for habeas corpus in federal court, but despite a 1963 Supreme Court decision to the contrary, a federal judge held that because the delay had prevented Coleman from obtaining a decision on the merits of his appeal, his claims would not be considered. Last year Coleman's case reached the Supreme Court itself, and in June the Court overruled its 1963 decision and held that because of the one-day delay in state court, Coleman was not entitled to a hearing in federal court.

So Coleman waits in his cell on death row, wondering whether somehow his lawyers will find a judge willing to make the state wait a little longer before killing him in order to try to find out who really murdered Wanda McCoy. His only hope, short of the politically charged realm of executive clemency, is that some court will decide that the evidence of his innocence is so strong that fundamental justice requires a hearing. But with the Rehnquist Court, even innocence may not be enough. That question is before the Court this term in the case of Leonel Herrera, whose claim of innocence, supported by the affidavit of an eyewitness to the crime, was rejected by a lower court on the ground that innocence, even if undisputed, provides no basis for a federal court to interfere with the execution of a state prisoner. Since a majority of the justices voted against even hearing Herrera's case, it appears that unless someone's mind is changed, that decision will be upheld.

With the decision in the Coleman case and the likely result in Herrera, the Rehnquist Court's triumph over forty years of American death penalty jurisprudence is substantially complete. On May 20 Roger Coleman may well become the first innocent victim of that triumph. He will surely not be the last. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Out of the Past

On the fiftieth anniversary of its first appearance, **Casablanca** (TEC) is being reissued. Inevitably, this is an occasion for it to be swooned over by some and to be debunked by others. Like a true liberal, I have a foot in each camp.

This doubleness is underscored because seeing it again had a strange double effect. Of course I saw it when it first came out, also a couple of times since; but in the most recent viewing, I felt as if I were seeing it for the first time while I was simultaneously remembering it. So I had, simultaneously, new and old responses.

First, some of the new ones. The outdoor settings now look really cheesy. The streets of Casablanca were mostly refurbished sets for *The Desert Song*, we're told, and they look it. But the interiors, particularly Rick's apartment, particularly the way it is lighted by Arthur Edeson, are excellent. The deadest scenes in the story are in the flashback about the Paris romance: Humphrey Bogart simply doesn't convince as a man maddeningly in love. In this flashback he is affecting only when he's left in the lurch at the railway station, which is when he begins to take on the tone of the man we have already met, mordant in Morocco.

The "heart" sequences are troweled on: the one in which Rick arranges for a young man to win at roulette so that he'll have the money to buy exit visas for himself and his wife; the one in which an elderly German couple misuse English "charmingly."

The subplot with Ugarte (Peter Lorre) is too stupid for a man of his supposed cleverness. Then there's Paul Henreid's performance as the anti-Nazi hero, Victor Laszlo. When I think of Henreid, I think of his appeal in *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*; his wooden performance here is discomfiting. Henreid died just two days after I re-saw *Casablanca*, which makes this comment awkward. But it's unavoidable.

Then there are the old responses—at least the ones that still pertain. Most of the dialogue, by Julius J. Epstein, Philip G. Epstein, and Howard Koch, is just as taut and wry as it once sounded. (The very last line, Rick's to Captain Renault, was written by the producer, Hal Wallis.) The character of Rick is the firmest, most time-proof element in the picture. Ingrid Bergman is lovely, but Ilsa's character seems jigsawed to fit a niche in the plot. Rick rings true. Leo Braudy once wrote that Rick's "choices bear a remarkable resemblance to those of American heroes from Natty Bumppo on down." Something like the Deerslayer, Rick is filled with taciturn nobility, a man living by high standards that are his own business. He says, "I stick my neck out for nobody," but we know otherwise. We like both his denial of heroism and our private knowledge of the truth.

This leads to the reason, in my view, for the picture's perennial popularity. Our times are wary of the romantic. We sometimes enjoy it (*Pretty Woman* is a recent example), but when we do, we know we're slumming. *Casablanca* gives us a rare chance to enjoy romance *without* slumming. Rick is so hard-boiled that any touch of lavender is wiped away. His undeludedness licenses us to empathize with his love. In a nitty-gritty time, *Casablanca* is a permissible romance.

One more reward, not unique to *Casablanca* but certainly part of its pleasure—a peculiar familiarity. As I watched the actors take their places in the story (quite apart from the two stars)—Claude Rains, Peter Lorre, Sydney Greenstreet, Marcel Dalio, S. Z. Sakall, John Qualen, Leonid Kinskey, Curt Bois, and others—I felt a sense of community. I *knew* those men. They used to visit me every four or five months, in films called by one name or another, but the titles didn't matter—I knew *them*.

My mother once told me that, when she was a girl around the turn of the century, she felt that the members of the 125th Street Stock Company were almost like members of the family. 125th Street got expanded to cover the entire globe, but in the high Hollywood days, when a studio had companies of players under contract to appear in its plentiful films, the feeling was much the same.

Babe Ruth has one thing in common with Enrico Caruso, and I don't mean girth. Each of them is an outstanding figure of the past who is well known to people today—better known, I suppose, than any colleagues of their day.

Presumably that explains why Caruso recordings and books are still available. Presumably that also explains why **The Babe** (Universal) was made. It's not the first picture about him: William Bendix

FILMS WORTH SEEING

American Dream. *Barbara Kopple, who made* Harlan County, U.S.A., *presents another excellent documentary about a (quite different) strike—Minnesota meatpackers in the 1980s. Gripping and important. (Reviewed 4/13/92)* **Howards End.** *A boon. Not only are the performances by Vanessa Redgrave, Emma Thompson, and Anthony Hopkins magnificent, the adaptation of Forster as such serves him honorably. (3/23/92)* **JFK.** *The controversy still rages. Oliver Stone's imaginative/fanciful work remains essential viewing. (1/27/92)* **Noises Off.** *A farce about the rehearsal and performance of a farce. Many laughs and even more laffs. Michael Caine heads a nicely nutty cast, Peter Bogdanovich directs with zing. (4/20/92)* **—SK**

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did *The Babe Ruth Story* in 1948, but I've completely forgotten it. (I have a clearer memory of *Babe Comes Home*, a silent film, made in 1927, in which Babe Ruth played himself. Anna Q. Nilsson was a laundress who became exasperated with the tobacco-juice stains she had to wash from his uniforms every week. It was contrived that the two of them meet ... and so on.) I'm not planning to remember *The Babe*, but it's better than Bendix's try. Maybe the next Babe film, forty years from now, will be even better.

The screenplay apparently touches just enough facts to keep it from outright fantasy. The Babe was raised in a Catholic "industrial school" in Baltimore, placed there by parents who simply couldn't discipline him. He played baseball in the school and was scouted by the Baltimore Orioles, who signed him, then sold him to the Boston Red Sox. He went from there to the Yankees, where he quickly became (the worn phrase fits) a living legend. He married twice. (I was in the Yankee Stadium bleachers the day he returned to the team after his second wedding. When he came out to play right field, the salty comments shouted from the stands made him turn around to face us, shake his fist, and mutter some remarks I wish I could have heard.) Much of the rest of the picture seems hoopla.

Apart from the embroiderings of his off-field life, a few baseball points might be questioned. His outstanding success as a pitcher for Boston is hardly mentioned. In his five seasons as a pitcher for Boston, he won 87 out of 131 games. The decision to concentrate on his hitting, to take him off the pitching staff and put him in the outfield, was a major matter.

With the Yankees, he is shown only as a home-run hitter. In fact, he was also a terrific fielder. I once saw him throw a practically perfect strike—with one bounce—from deep right field to home plate, to nail a runner coming in from third. And was Miller Huggins, the Yankee manager, really a barking terrier as shown here? The impression given in the press was that he was a quiet, much-liked man.

John Goodman, who was impressive as the maniac in *Barton Fink*, is made up to resemble the Babe closely and gives a good enough hearty performance. Arthur Hiller directs adequately. Haskell Wexler, one of the best of cinematographers, who is said to be choosy about what he works on, shot this film—unexceptionally. Why he chose to do this run-of-the-mill bio pic is not clear. •

The Lubavitchers' powerful and preposterous messianism.

Last Exit to Brooklyn

By Allan Nadler

"Today," writes Edward Hoffman in his piece of propaganda about the Lubavitcher movement, which appeared in the very season in which Crown Heights erupted,

> Crown Heights is one of the few truly integrated sections of New York City, where black and Jewish homeowners coexist as next-door neighbors, each determined to maintain the safety and viability of their community as a place for families to live peacefully.... The Rebbe's devoted application of Torah principles to contemporary life enabled Crown Heights to remain a thriving Jewish area.

And I am Marie—no, the Chief Rabbi—of Romania. Hoffman's book is filled with such inanities. Still, it is an unwittingly useful book. Though he has assembled almost no reliable information about the most famous and the most powerful movement in contemporary Orthodox Judaism, he has produced a kind of anthology of this sect's extraordinary delusions about itself.

The Lubavitcher movement is based in Crown Heights in Brooklyn, but its missionaries have reached virtually every town and hamlet in the world in which there are Jews. Hoffman clearly subscribes to the Lubavitchers' own conceit that they deserve credit for just about all that is good in Jewish life today. Among the many blessings for which he ascribes full credit to the Lubavitcher movement, and to the leadership of its Rebbe or Grand Rabbi, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, are: the Israeli army's victory in 1967; glasnost and the new freedoms attained by Soviet Jews; the achievements of Israeli leaders such as

Allan Nadler is director of research at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.

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Zalman Shazar; the positive attitudes toward Jews, Judaism, and Israel of Ronald Reagan and George Bush (about the attitudes of the latter Hoffman wrote too soon); and the spiritual survival of Jewry worldwide, from the Americas to North Africa to Australia.

All of these accomplishments pale, however, before Hoffman's "confidence that through the Lubavitchers' devoted spiritual outreach around the globe, the long-awaited redemption will finally come." He shares this eschatological certainty with the Lubavitchers. Indeed, the special fascination of this sect, and its special repulsion, is owed to its transformation of itself in recent decades into the first mass messianic movement within Judaism since the seventeenth century, which saw the disastrous misadventures of Shabbetai Zevi, the false messiah of Izmir. The "long-awaited redemption" of the Jews has become Schneerson's obsession, the principal impetus for the unprecedented and aggressive evangelism of his movement.

Schneerson's acute messianic expectations dominate every facet of his theology, and they have served as the basis for virtually all of his social and political initiatives. He evokes the imminence of the apocalypse in every one of his frequent public addresses at the regular religious assemblies known as *farbrengen* (Yiddish for "get-togethers" with the Rebbe). And the urgent messianic expectation with which he has inflamed his followers has led many Lubavitchers to suspect that Schneerson is himself the Savior-King of the Jews. Certainly all Lubavitcher Hasidim believe that their Rebbe is, at the very least, "the most likely candidate," as they put it in a typical vulgarization of a traditional notion.

Today the Lubavitchers sponsor highway billboards, produce posters and bumper stickers, and buy full-page ads in *The New York Times* to announce the imminence of the Jewish apocalypse, using dumb Madison Avenue slogans such as "Moshiach [Messiah]—Be a Part of It!" The unsubtle refrain of their favorite hymn, led by the Rebbe, is: "We want Moshiach now! We don't want to wait." And so, according to a recent news report (I choose one among many):

> Some 2,500 women crowded into the Lubavitch movement's headquarters one recent Saturday night, each hoping to personally witness messianic revelation in the form of Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher rebbe.... Some had tears running down their cheeks. One murmured "please, please" over and over again, as she beseeched the Messiah to make his presence known.... "We shall go on and on, until there will be a legion of the king. You will see," said Devorah Gitchel, one of the evening's participants.... Through the Lubavitch movement's sophisticated satellite network, the event was seen, and in some places replicated, in fifty-seven cities in thirty countries, from Argentina to Kharkov to Tunis.

Needless to say, no revelation came, on that night or any other. The really remarkable fact is that the Rebbe has said nothing and done nothing to dissuade his followers from their preposterous belief in his messianic status. It is an omission that has stunned and angered many quarters of the Jewish world. Not that his followers would wish to be dissuaded: his promotion is their promotion, too, as they become possessed of the certainty that they are themselves the central agents in the realization of the Jews' most cherished dream.

Despite All Odds:
The Story of Lubavitch
by Edward Hoffman
(Simon and Schuster, 224 pp., $19.95)

Habad:
The Hasidism of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady
by Roman A. Foxbrunner
(University of Alabama Press, 400 pp., $49.95)

Communicating the Infinite:
The Emergence of the Habad School
by Naftali Loewenthal
(University of Chicago Press, 392 pp., $39.95)

This compulsive messianism colors, and in many ways distorts, the way that they view the world around them. Thus, for example, several days into last summer's black anti-Hasidic rioting in Crown Heights, a spokesman for Lubavitch, Rabbi Samuel Butman, proclaimed that the violence was a sure sign that the final redemption was near. (Al Sharpton would probably not be dissed to hear that he is a chieftain in the wars of Gog and Magog.) It was this same apocalyptic vision that was used by Butman to justify Schneerson's mystifying, total silence in the wake of the violence against his followers ("Kill the Jews" and "Heil Hitler" were the taunts of Brooklyn's mobs in those ugly days). Now, the Rebbe is hardly a quiet, retiring mystic. He is an outspoken and exceptionally political rabbi, whose face is familiar to millions worldwide; during his half century at the helm of his sect, he has issued public pronouncements on virtually every religious, social, and political subject imaginable, from prayer in American schools to the religious meaning of Operation Desert Storm. And yet this powerful leader had absolutely nothing to say about the most serious crisis in the history of his community.

Where leadership, and practical wisdom, should have been, there was only more eschatological speculation. It reached its peak in the immediate aftermath of the unrest, when Schneerson assured his followers that the Prince of Peace would surely arrive before Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year. When the New Year passed with still no signs of the Savior, Schneerson told his followers that, although he personally had done all that was required of him to bring in the messianic era, there had been a delay on account of the Jewish people's failure to respond to his missives. The Rebbe reassured the faithful that the end would begin to materialize in about a year. Well, two at most.

The Lubavitchers may not "want to wait," but it is important for observers of this peculiar phenomenon to understand that, when it comes to the Messiah, the Jews have traditionally preferred to wait. The hysterical apocalypticism of this sect has absolutely no place in normative Jewish thought and absolutely no precedent in normative Hasidic thought. Since Talmudic times, in fact, the rabbis have strongly cautioned against it. Fearing the harmful consequences of eschatological passion, its disruptive impact upon life in the here and the now, which is a sacred and satisfactory theater of meaning for rabbinic Judaism, the Talmudic sages legislated against reckoning the precise time of the redemption, and forbade hastening, or even praying excessively for, its realization. And Maimonides, Judaism's greatest philosopher, insisted that "one must not engage in the study of the messianic legends ... nor should one regard such legends as central, for they do not contribute to the love or the fear of God. Moreover, one must not speculate regarding the apocalypse, but rather simply wait, and have faith."

Schneerson's messianism is egregious not merely from the standpoint of messianism, but also from the standpoint of Hasidism. For it has been the very essence of the theology of Hasidism, almost since the movement's inception in the mid-eighteenth century, to neutralize, in Gershom Scholem's phrase, Judaism's hope for a collective messianic redemption, and at times even to replace it with the prescription for a personal mystical salvation. The need for the apocalyptic transformation of the world and the salvation of the entire people was scanted by those who believed that they could attain a personal state of spiritual felicity even in an unredeemed world.

Hasidism began two centuries ago as a populist movement for spiritual revival among the alienated Jewish peasants of

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the remote western Russian regions of Podolia and Vohlynia. It was initiated by a circle of kabbalistic enthusiasts centered around the charismatic, anti-rabbinic faith healer and miracle worker Israel ben Eliezer, better known as the Besht—a Hebrew acronym for Baal Shem Tov, or Master of the Divine Name, a title deriving from his mystical capacity to use the permutations of the Hebrew names of God to effect miracles and healings. The Besht surrounded himself with a coterie of mystical enthusiasts, but in subsequent generations the movement spread rather quickly among the untutored masses of the remote Jewish settlements of Eastern Europe, largely due to the inspired and calculating leadership of his most noted disciple, Rabbi Dov Baer, known to Hasidim simply as the Maggid, or preacher, of Mezeritch.

A student of the Baal Shem Tov and a great charismatic mystic in his own right, the Maggid of Mezeritch carefully nurtured a group of disciples, each of whom he strategically dispatched to various Jewish centers throughout Eastern Europe in order to disseminate the new pietistic and mystical doctrines. Each of these disciples established a distinct Hasidic sect, or court, from which the message of Hasidism was energetically propagated to thousands of disciples in nearby Jewish communities. By the fourth generation of the movement, the leadership of these courts took the form of ecclesiastical dynasties, with Hasidic rebbes most often bequeathing their positions of authority to their eldest sons.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman (1745-1813), a young rabbinic scholar from the Belorussian town of Lyady, was one of the most distinguished and creative pupils of the Maggid of Mezeritch. A man of remarkable intellect and unusual erudition in both Talmudic law and Jewish mysticism, he began to attract followers as the rabbi of Liozna, his small Belorussian birthplace. In 1800, having earned a reputation as both a rabbinic scholar and a mystical master, Shneur Zalman established a Hasidic court in nearby Lyady. Even by the standards of the court of the Maggid of Mezeritch, Shneur Zalman was exceptional, and unusually prolific. His magnum opus, known simply as *Tanya* (the Aramaic word for "instruction"), which appeared in 1796, was the first systematic exposition of Hasidic thought, and his multivolume code of Jewish law represented a practical reformulation of the entire body of rabbinical jurisprudence. His energetic and learned dissemination of Hasidic mystical ideals gave rise to a distinct sect within Hasidism known by the Hebrew acronym for the levels of wisdom—HaBaD (for Hokhmah, Binah, and Daat, or germinal, developmental, and conclusive knowledge).

Since the day in 1820 that Shneur Zalman's son and successor, named Dov Baer after the Maggid of Mezeritch, moved Habad's headquarters to the small Belorussian town of Lubavitch, the adherents of Habad have become known as Lubavitchers. Until the middle of this century, Lubavitch was a relatively small and geographically contained sect, and almost an elitist movement. The Holocaust, in which the largest Hasidic dynasties in Poland were decimated, changed all that. In 1940 the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe escaped to America.

At the core of the theology of Hasidism is an absolute faith in the pervasive presence of God in the universe. Rejecting the asceticism and the pessimism that had dominated Jewish mysticism since the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, Hasidism preached a popularized form of the Kabbalah that was marked by a metaphysical optimism, which emphasized the immanence of God in the material world and, consequently, the accessibility of holiness to every man. In the words of one of the earliest works of Hasidism, the pseudo-epigraphic "ethical will" of the Baal Shem Tov:

> The Scriptural imperative: "I keep the Lord before me always" instructs us constantly to focus on the fact that every created thing stands equally before God ... for everything that exists and all that occurs in the world is of Him.

It was this active optimism, this sense of the immediacy of the divine, that was largely the key to Hasidism's quick successes among the persecution-weary and impoverished Jewish masses of Eastern Europe. The Jewish communities of western Russia and the Ukraine had experienced a series of terrible persecutions and massacres in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their repeated encounters with brutal anti-Semitism, combined with oppressive economic circumstances and an effete and uncaring rabbinic leadership, created fertile ground for the development of a populist movement for religious revival. (Some historians have compared the spiritual innovations of the Baal Shem Tov to those of his contemporary John Wesley.)

Hasidism's belief in the immanence of God represented a radical revision of the regnant dualistic school of Jewish mysticism that had been initiated in the Galilean town of Safed by the renowned

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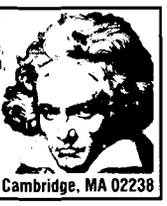

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sixteenth-century kabbalistic master Rabbi Isaac Luria. The Lurianic worldview was predicated upon a cosmogonic myth according to which God had to "withdraw" before creating the universe, in order to allow for a "space" other than himself. This primordial withdrawal of God left an awful, gaping abyss between the divine realms and the created universe. At the same time, the myth of divine contraction served a useful theological purpose in explaining the existence of evil in God's creation, identifying it with the coarse matter of the physical world that was abandoned to allow space for Creation.

Such a dualistic cosmogony lent itself easily to ascetic expressions of spirituality, in which man was required to transcend the evil, that is, the sensual, temptations of the physical world in order to get closer to its transcendent Creator. Lurianic Kabbalah's dualism also issued in a pessimistic interpretation of Jewish history, according to which the chronically oppressive exile of the Jews simply mirrored a higher similar fate, the exile of God from the world. Like the Jews, the divine, too, is dispersed, and can be redeemed only through man's self-imposed exile and withdrawal from the pleasures of this life.

All this was too much for Hasidism. It radically revised Lurianic pessimism and its dualistic view of Creation, as well as its attendant asceticism, by insisting that the primordial withdrawal of God from the world is to be understood epistemologically, not ontologically. That is, God did not actually withdraw from Creation at all. In order to accommodate man's inherent cognitive limitations and render the physical universe sensible to him, God merely had to obscure himself from human apprehension. The early Hasidic theorists conceded that, from the standpoint of man's limited cognitive capacity to apprehend the divine in the created universe, God does indeed appear to be distant from the world. They insisted, however, that he remains, in essence, thoroughly immanent in his own creation. And precisely in this concealment of the divine presence in the world lies Hasidism's great spiritual challenge to man: to overcome, through mystical contemplation, the dichotomy between God's apparent transcendence and his actual immanence.

The contrasts, so emphatically drawn by the medieval theologians, between God and the created world, body and soul, good and evil, the real and the ideal, are all deliberately obscured in Hasidic thought. The medievals' contrast between an imperfect and corruptible material universe and a transcendent, eternally changeless, perfect, and self-sufficient Creator had no place in Hasidic mysticism. For the Maggid and his disciples, God is down here, not up there; or more precisely, the distinction between down here and up there is no longer interesting. This belief led the Hasidic masters to insist that the temporal, physical world be celebrated, not transcended. Rather than counseling the suppression of sensual pleasure, as did earlier rabbis and mystics, the Hasidic masters insisted that the senses be used in the service of God. According to the scholar Roman A. Foxbrunner (who is himself a Lubavitcher), in his learned but ponderous study of the thought of Shneur Zalman, the essential idea of classical Hasidic theosophy is this:

> God's perfection ... consists not in eternal, changeless self-contemplation but in a dynamic fullness of being that becomes progressively more perfect and encompasses every imaginable change and diversity.... The lush, colorful, variegated world of phenomena and feeling is not an obstacle to be avoided, a test to be passed, a temptation to be suppressed; it is an opportunity to be exploited for [divine] Service.

For early Hasidism, the highest ideal of religious practice was the attainment of a mystical state of communion with God, known in Hebrew as *Devekuth*. What distinguished *Devekuth* from the ecstatic states of other schools of mysticism was that it was not necessarily a matter of transcendence. Given the immanence of God in nature, one could even achieve a mystical state, according to many Hasidic masters, through engaging in properly directed physical acts, such as eating, drinking, and copulating with one's wife. They preached the joyful worship of the immanent God in and through the physical universe that he pervades.

In the early history of the Hasidic movement, all of its devotees were encouraged by the rebbes to strive for some form of *Devekuth*: the mysticism of the early movement was democratic. By the third generation, however, the achievement of the exalted state, particularly when attained through sensual indulgences, was viewed as too risky a popular ideal. *Devekuth* was henceforth to be practiced only by the rebbes themselves, through whose experiences the Hasidim could enjoy a kind of vicarious transport. The unprecedented spiritual power with which this endowed the Hasidic masters gave rise to unique rituals. Among the most widespread of these practices was the rebbe's Sabbath *tisch*, or table, a public forum at which the master could share his mystical attainments with the masses of his Hasidim; to this day throngs of the faithful gather to focus on their rebbe as he "eats and drinks in holiness" and to compete for his leftovers, through whose consumption they, too, could partake of the master's mystical experiences.

The position of the rebbe, known also as the Zaddik or Righteous One, became increasingly exalted in Hasidic theology, to the point where he became the sole instrument for the spiritual redemption of his disciples. In some Hasidic sects it was believed that the soul of the rebbe mysteriously included within it the souls of each one of his followers. The perfection of one's soul thus became contingent upon one's attachment and devotion to the rebbe. This adoration is rather an odd thing in Judaism, but the contemporary Lubavitchers have taken it to a new extreme by insisting that Schneerson's soul encompasses not only their own souls, but also the souls of every Jew alive today. This myth has led his followers to refer to him with such hyperbole as the "Moses of our Age," the "Universal Soul," and the "Prince of the Generation."

While Hasidism's real theological originality consisted in articulating and popularizing a revision of the esoteric doctrines of the Kabbalah, its most well-known innovation was the introduction of a radically new form of rabbinic leadership. The extraordinary authority of the rebbe represented a radical rejection of the traditional rabbinate, whose influence had hitherto always been owed to the charisma of scholarship and not to the charisma of mystical experience. The institution of the Zaddik marked a transformation of the rabbi from a detached and dispassionate scholar into a personal kabbalistic guru.

Hasidism's bold challenge to traditional rabbinic authority, and particularly to the traditional prestige of learning, was among the main reasons that it was viewed with such deep suspicion by the Eastern European rabbinic establishment, which warned Jews against mingling or praying together with the Hasidim, and even issued a ban prohibiting "intermarriage" with their sons and daughters. A veritable holy war on Hasidism was declared by the preeminent rabbinic sage of the eighteenth century, Elijah ben Solomon of Vilna (best known as the Gaon, or the genius, of Vilna). And Shneur Zalman of Lyady, the founder of Habad, was among the early preachers singled out for suppression by the enemies of Hasidism. As a consequence of denunciations by the

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Jewish ecclesiastical establishment, he was arrested, tried, and twice jailed by the czarist authorities in St. Petersburg, in 1798 and 1801. (The anniversaries of his release from prison are still celebrated by the Lubavitchers.) Still, despite fierce opposition, Hasidism continued to spread, and thanks to the rebbes' spirited propagation of its seductively optimistic form of mystical piety, the movement quickly gained strongholds throughout Eastern Europe.

Again, it is important to understand that the worldliness and the monism of Hasidic theology resulted not only in a rejection of the asceticism that had dominated most forms of pre-Hasidic Jewish spirituality, but also in a new and pronounced indifference to messianism and the hunger for the end of days. For messianism is rooted, like ascetic religion, in a profound anxiety about the universe as it is, in a deep desire to overcome it, to transform it materially and temporally.

Foxbrunner's book demonstrates that the founder of Lubavitcher Hasidism did not demur in any way from the Hasidic distaste for the messianic. Although he insists that the future redemption was a subject that did exercise Shneur Zalman, Foxbrunner makes it very clear that the messianic era "is generally described in purely mystical terms." In sharp distinction to Menachem Mendel Schneerson's constant reference to political events (such as the Gulf war) as proof of the imminence of redemption, Shneur Zalman bestowed absolutely no messianic significance upon the events of his day. Messianic salvation remained, in his thinking, a purely internal and mystical process. As Foxbrunner writes:

> One will therefore not find in R. Shneur Zalman's discourses ... a note of eager expectancy. The more a kabbalist could internalize the identification of the supernal effects of the commandments with the gradual triggering of the messianic revelation, the less the actualization of the Messianic Era excited him. Fulfilling the commandments was for him all but the equivalent of that actualization—it was the Messianic Era writ small.

The later masters of the Habad dynasty, like its founder, took Hasidism's doctrine of divine immanence to its furthest conclusions. They taught not only that God is intimate with his creatures, but that he is indistinguishable from his Creation. As Shneur Zalman emphasized over and again, "There exists nothing but God." As for the material universe engaged by the senses, this is nothing more than an illusion, a masking of God, a challenge to man to penetrate it and to perceive the exclusively divine reality beyond.

This denial of ontological reality to the material universe, and this insistence that the sensory world is illusory, has been characterized by scholars of Hasidism as "panentheism" or "acosmism," terms vividly suggestive of the radical character of the doctrine. Certainly there is a paradox in such a theology. It is world affirming *and* world denying. By insisting on the pervasiveness of God in the universe, Habad affirms the importance, even the sanctity, of mundane existence. Yet in finally denying ontological reality to anything but God, Habad does seek to get beyond the world.

This dialectic has been a central feature of Habad Hasidism since its inception, and it is masterfully described by the fine Israeli scholar Rachel Elior in her book *The Paradoxical Ascent to God* (which will soon appear in English from SUNY Press). And this "paradoxical ascent" further contributed to classical Lubavitcher Hasidism's virtual indifference to national salvation. The masters of Habad urged their followers instead to pursue the intense contemplation of mystical acosmism, the awareness, through deep reflection, of the intimate presence, and finally the exclusive reality, of God. It is no wonder that there is hardly even an oblique reference to Jewish national hopes in early Habad literature. And yet today the Lubavitcher Rebbe speaks of almost nothing except the Messiah, who is on his way.

That is just one of the Lubavitchers' many contradictions. There is also the galling matter of the radical and unremarked-upon shift in Lubavitcher attitudes to Zionism and the significance of the State of Israel. Throughout his book, Hoffman portrays these Hasidim as passionate supporters of Israel. He contrasts their positive attitude to Israel with the anti-Zionism of the Reform movement in modern Judaism: while previous Lubavitcher rebbes were unfailingly enthused with the Jewish return to the Land of Israel, the Reformers were urging their followers to forget about the biblical prophecies of a return to Zion and to adopt the lands of their exile as permanent homes in which to realize their national and spiritual destinies. He deridingly cites the early American Reform leaders' proclamation that "America is our Palestine; Here is our Zion and Jerusalem."

What Hoffman fails to mention is that the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who has never once set foot in the land or the state of Israel, has often made very similar statements. For, regardless of the pro-Israel facade that they now present to their financial supporters in the non-Orthodox Jewish community, the Lubavitchers are not, and have never been, Zionists. Quite the contrary. The two previous Lubavitcher rebbes, Shalom Dov Baer Schneerson (1866-1920) and Joseph Isaac Schneerson (1880-1950), waged war on all forms of Jewish nationalism, religious and secular.

Shalom Dov Baer Schneerson characterized Zionism as a "poison which contaminates and destroys the soul." He assured his followers that because Zionism constituted nothing less than a heretical rebellion against divine providence, it would fail in its efforts to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. (So much for the prophetic powers of the rebbes.) His successor Joseph Isaac Schneerson—the current Rebbe's father-in-law and predecessor—led the ultra-Orthodox battle against the Zionists both in Russia and in the United States. He insisted that his followers not follow the "evil Zionist heretics," and his customary response to Hasidim who requested his permission to escape the oppressiveness of life in Communist Russia by immigrating to the land of Israel was, in Yiddish, "*macht doh Erets Yisroel*" ("create your Israel here"), an expression that was invoked by the present Rebbe when he urged his followers not to desert Crown Heights.

Joseph Isaac Schneerson's feelings about the movement to create a Jewish national homeland in Israel were reflected in his frequent condemnations of Zionism, such as this one:

> Here [in Brooklyn] we are in exile among the goyim, but over there, in Israel, we are in exile among the Israelis. It is far worse and more difficult to be in exile among those evil Israelis than it is to be among the evil gentiles, because the Goy only keeps the Jewish body in captivity ... whereas the evil Israelite wishes to take the Jewish soul captive and to contaminate pure Jewish souls.... Many evil Israelites who have gathered together in the land of Israel seek to contaminate not only Jewish souls, but also to defile the Holy Land itself, and to infect the Hebrew language.... They usurp the Hebrew language and give Hebrew names to the evil institutions which they have established in which they convert Jewish children to apostasy.... Those of us who are here should be thankful that we are not over there in the diaspora of the land of Israel, in which the pious Jews are enslaved to the sinful members of our people. It is clear that before the Messiah arrives, it will be necessary to cleanse Israel from these evildoers, whom God despises.

This pronouncement was made public in New York by Menachem Mendel Schneerson during the celebration of Passover in April 1943. Thankful to be in

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exile in 1943! The publication of this testimony to the preferability of Jewish fate in exile chillingly coincided with the single most emblematic moment of that fate: the Nazi destruction of the Warsaw ghetto.

The problem for the Lubavitchers was that the Zionists succeeded. The triumph of Jewish nationalism, and the almost universal Jewish support for Israel, threatened to leave the Lubavitchers out in the cold, and so, their own traditions notwithstanding, they pragmatically changed their tune. This grand rabbi who has never been to Israel and never repudiated his own anti-Zionist theology now presumes to instruct the Jewish state on its proper, indeed its divinely mandated, courses of action. He has become the most influential hawk in the Diaspora. During the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the Rebbe publicly urged the Israelis to capture Damascus; and during Israel's war in Lebanon, he instructed them to take Beirut. He was a noisy critic of the Camp David Accords, and has consistently maintained that Israel must never return so much as one inch of occupied territory under any circumstances. Schneerson's pronouncements on Israel's foreign affairs are not presented as his personal opinion, they are issued ex cathedra, as infallible expressions of the divine will. Or, as the Lubavitchers in Israel say, they are *"D'var Malkhut,"* Royal Decree.

Those decrees have included the Rebbe's repeated interventions into Israeli domestic legislation, particularly in the controversy over the definition of a Jew under Israel's Law of Return. During the election campaign in Israel in 1990, candidates of the ultra-Orthodox Agudath Israel party, which was endorsed by the Rebbe, handed out amulets with a picture of the Rebbe, promising his personal blessings for anyone who voted for them. Following the elections, the Rebbe even managed to use his influence, all the way from Brooklyn, to undermine the formation of a Labor-led coalition government because of Shimon Peres's opposition to an amendment to the Law of Return that would exclusively recognize the Orthodox definition of Jewish identity. But Schneerson's advocacy of extreme right-wing positions in Israel's affairs has never been accompanied by an acceptance of the Zionist ideology that gave rise to the state.

The inconsistencies and the hypocrisies abound. Consider the unprecedented reach of the Rebbe's teachings. One of the most unexpected consequences of Habad's messianic activism has been Schneerson's recently proclaimed "mission to the gentiles." Appealing to an ancient rabbinic view that the "goyim" are expected to fulfill only the seven commandments, including the prohibitions against murder and idolatry, issued by God to Noah after the flood, the Rebbe recently encouraged his followers to preach these "Noahide Laws" to the world. In preparing for redemption, he argues, it is essential that American society become more religious, and that its citizens, Jews and non-Jews, acquire a more heightened awareness of God's presence. It is for this reason that the Rebbe has energetically supported prayer in American schools, if only in the form of a moment of silence, and has spoken in favor of overturning the current laws regarding abortion. Most controversially, he has encouraged the blurring of the separation of church and state, primarily through a zealous campaign of erecting huge menorahs in public places in major American cities during Hanukkah. The Lubavitchers have even gone to court in a number of states to protect these obvious violations of the principle of separation.

There is a sense in which these efforts at undermining the secular character of American public life are perfectly consistent with classical Habad theology. Hasidism's insistence on the immanence of God in creation, and especially its mystical refusal to acknowledge the reality of a purely physical realm of existence bereft of holiness, abhors a *saeculum.* The idea of a polity deliberately conceived as secular, that is, the idea of a polity such as America's, is anathema to the mystic whose theology does not allow for the reality of a profane realm of existence. And yet there are some powerful ironies in Habad's new messianic universalism, in its mission to the gentiles; and surely the most unpleasant of them concerns Habad's otherwise undisguised and even racial contempt for the "goyim."

In the normative rabbinic and Jewish philosophical traditions, Israel's choseness was most commonly seen to derive from God's revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai. It was the uniqueness of their religion, not of their race, that distinguished Jews from others. Only a very small number of idiosyncratic medieval Jewish theologians—most notably the poet and philosopher Judah Ha-Levi in twelfth-century Spain and the mystic Judah Loewe in sixteenth-century Prague—sought to define the Jewish distinction racially rather than spiritually.

Yet it was precisely this minority view, according to which there is something innately superior about the Jews, that was rehabilitated in its most extreme form by Shneur Zalman of Lyady. The founder of Lubavitcher Hasidism taught that there is a difference of essence between the souls of Jews and the souls of gentiles, that only in the Jewish soul does there reside a spark of divine vitality. As for the goyim, here is Foxbrunner's characterization of Shneur Zalman's attitude:

> Gentile souls are of a completely different and inferior order. They are totally evil, with no redeeming qualities whatsoever. Consequently, references to gentiles in Rabbi Shneur Zalman's teachings are invariably invidious.... Their material abundance derives from supernal refuse. Indeed, they themselves derive from refuse, which is why they are more numerous than the Jews, as the pieces of chaff outnumber the kernels.... All Jews were innately good, all gentiles innately evil. Jews were the pinnacle of creation and served the Creator, gentiles its nadir and worshiped the heavenly hosts.

Shneur Zalman's racism far exceeded the much more limited religious elitism of the few earlier rabbis who subscribed

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to a racial theory of Jewish choseness. It is virtually without precedent and without parallel in the history of Jewish thought. Moreover, this characterization of gentiles as being inherently evil, as being spiritually as well as biologically inferior to Jews, has not in any way been revised in later Habad writing. The obvious incompatability of this racist view of the gentiles with Habad's current missionizing to them is something that the Lubavitchers have not even begun to acknowledge or to address. These are matters that their partisan historians deliberately obscure, as they cling to the myth that Habad Hasidism is essentially ahistorical and impervious to change.

There are other significant ways in which today's Habad Hasidim are extending the spiritual initiatives of the founders. The current Lubavitcher Rebbe has established centers, known as Habad houses, in virtually every place in the world in which there is even a semblance of a Jewish community; his followers can be seen in malls and on street corners in every major American city, and in special vans known as "mitzvah tanks" (they are fond of the military metaphor) and "mitzvah mobiles." These vans distribute their literature and sacred artifacts, which today include photographs of the Rebbe, and preach the good news of the Messiah's impending arrival. While this activism has reached new extremes during the messianically charged tenure of the current Lubavitcher Rebbe, it is perfectly consistent with a central objective of Habad's original ideology, namely, the widest possible dissemination of Hasidic mysticism to the untutored Jewish masses.

This goal of nineteenth-century Habad, "to communicate esoteric Hasidic teachings to the broad ranks of the Hasidic fraternity," is described in lucid detail by Naftali Loewenthal, a British scholar who is a Lubavitcher, in his erudite, if not always perfectly objective, history of ideas. Loewenthal carefully narrates the dialectical process in the intellectual history of Habad by which the esoteric kernel of earlier kabbalistic teachings, once zealously guarded from popular dissemination by an elite circle of initiates, was gradually "translated" into accessible forms by Shneur Zalman, and later by his son Dov Baer, in order to render them "relevant to ever broader echelons of Jewish society." According to Loewenthal, "the real point of originality of the Habad school" consists precisely in this "ethos of ever-increasing communication of the esoteric."

Loewenthal is correct in this assessment of the uniqueness of Habad, but he errs in attributing a messianic impetus to Habad's original popularization of mysticism. This is an apologetic distortion. Loewenthal's otherwise excellent study is marred by such subtle attempts to justify the unprecedented aspects of the current Rebbe's ideology by reading them into the theological writings of the founders of Habad. He repeatedly tries to portray the development of this branch of Hasidism as the natural and inevitable product of the religious thought of the original sect established by the Baal Shem Tov.

Thus Loewenthal's thesis about the messianic element in early Habad Hasidism is based on a single letter attributed to the Baal Shem Tov, in which the founder of Hasidism described a "conversation" he had with the Messiah during a mystical trance. In this conversation, the Messiah informed him that the final redemption is entirely contingent upon the spread of his, that is, the Baal Shem Tov's, teachings throughout the world. The letter recounts that he was initially pained by the realization that redemption would be a long time coming, but then became ecstatic when he sensed that he could at least instruct a small circle of devotees in mystical techniques so that they, too, could share the exalted spiritual life that he enjoyed.

It should be plain, however, that this fascinating text can just as plausibly be read as a loss of heart about the messianic era, as an attempt to replace the inertia of messianic expectation with an active and practical formula for personal salvation in an unredeemed world. And there are other problems with Loewenthal's book. He seriously exaggerates the historical significance, and more generally the sophistication, of Habad. His revisionist reading of an infamous episode in the early history of the movement provides a perfect example.

In 1812, in the midst of Napoleon's Russian campaign, Shneur Zalman publicly expressed his dread of the French conqueror and prayed for the victory of Alexander I. His rationalization for supporting a furiously anti-Semitic czar over an Emperor who was bringing civil liberties to the Jews of Europe was simple:

> If Bonaparte wins, the wealth of the Jews will increase and their position will be raised. But their hearts will be estranged from their Father in Heaven. However, if Czar Alexander wins, then although the poverty of the Jews will increase and their position will be lower, their hearts will cleave to and be bonded with their Father in Heaven.

Understandably uncomfortable with the implications of this episode, Loewenthal insists that, far from being opposed to the Jews' attainment of civil liberties, Shneur Zalman was simply concerned about the secularization and assimilation that Napoleon would force upon his Jewish subjects. He insists that "R. Shneur Zalman did not want the ghetto: he, together with his son, Dob Ber, sought 'permanent freedom' for the Jewish people." But what is this "permanent freedom" to which the early Lubavitchers aspired? It turns out to consist in the conversion of all Jews to Habad Hasidism!

By the end of his book, all pretense to objectivity gone, Loewenthal tries to show that Habad spirituality offered the true and permanent solution for the "Jewish problem" in eastern Europe. Had it only been adopted by the Jewish masses, he suggests, this campaign for

Stadium

The women behind us are rating
the players' cute butts,
finagling the opera glasses
from our friend, the birdwatcher,
who's trying to determine
the species of martin
reeling and swooping past the mezzanine.

You can't swat the gnats away, a haze
in the ball park's
smoky glow, without a scorecard.
Elsewhere on the upper deck,
a child has dripped the hot cheese
of nachos on the hair,
silver and slicked, of a sleepy-eyed man.

What I remember of games
is this: not the slides or the circus catches
or the long drives tipped into the bullpen
but the beer spilled
on box seats of safety patrols,
and the fans racing out on the field,
and the rain delays, everyone huddled
by the lit concession stands, and a welcome breeze
shooting through the gaps of entry ramps
with a burst of lush mist.

JOHN DRURY

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the mystical awareness of the immanence of God would have been far preferable to the Jewish enlightenment, and to Zionism. And this confidence in the superiority of Habad to all other expressions of Judaism, not to mention other faiths, completely dominates Lubavitch thinking today. It is typically reflected in the statement of a Lubavitch emissary, cited by Hoffman, about the place of Lubavitch in the context of the larger Jewish community:

> Lubavitch cannot be slotted in, because it stems from a much higher perspective, and it radiates and generates breadth, depth, and purpose into all of the aforementioned agencies [synagogues, Hebrew schools, and Jewish communal organizations and philanthropies].

All their protestations of tolerance and all their have-a-nice-day evangelical sweetness notwithstanding, there really is no room in the Lubavitch psyche for such notions as religious pluralism and cultural diversity. Just as classical Habad's monistic mysticism could not tolerate the idea of any realm of existence divested of holiness, the Lubavitchers today cannot genuinely respect the constitutional foundations of American society or the secular origins of the State of Israel. The Lubavitchers have broken new ground in giving the appearance of an embrace of modernity; they make instant use of new technology, they work the American political system smoothly, they have mastered the black arts of public relations, they will drown you in testimonials (I quote from a press release for the celebration of Schneerson's recent birthday) "by world-class politicians (e.g., Italian PM Andrioti [sic], Mrs. Margaret Thatcher) actors (e.g., Whoopie [sic] Goldberg, Elliot Gould, Jon Voight), and others concerning the Rebbe's impact on their own lives"; but this appearance is deceptive.

It is not difficult for those who espouse a theology that distinguishes between the exoteric and the esoteric, that both affirms the world and rejects the world, to seem one way but be another way, to participate in the world but for purposes unstated and entirely their own. The Lubavitchers combine a utilitarian approach to modern institutions with a deep contempt for their values. Their approach to modernity is purely instrumental, and directed solely toward the world's conversion to their way of thinking. And it is no wonder, if they are convinced that this conversion is the necessary condition for the redemption of all creation.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, upon whom so much of this messianic hope hangs, is 90 years old and ailing. He is childless, and he has not even suggested a successor. When pressed about the future of the dynasty, Lubavitchers simply affirm that "Moshiach is on his way." Perhaps he is. But if he tarries much longer, the fate of Habad will be as uncertain as the apocalypse. What awaits this movement, and many of its supporters and fellow travelers in the Jewish world, is an experience of eschatological disappointment; and that, as the Jews have learned many times, from the first century to the seventeenth century, is the cruelest and most spiritually crushing experience of all. •

The Heart of the Country

BY ROY PORTER

Customs in Common by E. P. Thompson

(The New Press, 547 pp., $29.95)

Easily the most charismatic living British historian, and eminent not just as a scholar but as a campaigner for disarmament and civil liberties, E. P. Thompson seems likely to prove an intellectual man of destiny. For if Marxist history survives, as surely it will, as a significant system of social analysis, that survival will owe much to Thompson's lifelong labors to refashion it as a penetrating instrument of historical inquiry that also wears a human face. Himself a missionary's son, Thompson has assumed the missionary's mantle to proselytize for "socialist humanism."

Ever since his *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955), Thompson has battled to establish a humane Marxism against doctrinaire ideologues and bloodless academics alike. His early bête noire was the crass reductionism of economic historians with their slide-rule attitudes to truth and uncritical establishmentarian prejudices. Notably in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), his masterpiece, Thompson combined sympathy, savage indignation, and archival expertise to trounce scholars blind to everything in the Industrial Revolution save technological tinkerings and trade cycles. How could an industrializing movement that shattered the lives of millions of workers be reduced to percentages and graphs? How dare number-crunching econometricians continue to ignore those workers who once had been exploited by the profit system? It was high time, Thompson insisted, to "rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' handloom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity."

Posterity's condescensions, however, were not unique to the right. Though a staunch Marxist, Thompson felt driven to target his most piercing polemics against fellow Communists, especially those of the structuralist and scientistic persuasion associated with Louis Althusser. *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (1978) accused such theoreticians of fiddling with barren philosophical models of socioeconomic configurations while disregarding the personal struggles that were the true motors of political change. Pretentious abstractions about class structures only perpetuated the fallacious paradigm of base and superstructure that, by disavowing human agency in the name of economic determinism, had paved the way for Stalin. Althusser, Thompson concluded, was only Stalinism dolled up in chic French fashions. What counted, by contrast, was not class structure, but class formation; and the key to that lay in grasping class consciousness, for "class," he contended, "is a historical phenomenon" that "happens when some men as a result of common experience ... feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs." One notes, as always, Thompson's utter avoidance of jargon.

Given the huge acclaim accorded even by its critics to *The Making of the English Working Class*, Thompson might have been expected to press forward with further studies of the proletariat, examining experiences of class conflict through studies of trade unions, Chartism, and labor politics under the conditions of Victorian industrial capitalism. But he plunged into something altogether more

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original. His inquiries reverted to the eighteenth century, to rural problems and to country folks. This might have seemed a suicide leap, and it was certainly a highly unorthodox move for a Marxist fascinated by class struggle.

For Georgian England, all the textbooks insisted, was essentially a stable, premodern society—"the peace of the Augustans" was a long-invoked cliché. J. H. Plumb had recently documented the "growth of political stability," and English society under the Hanoverians was widely viewed as basking in a sedate prosperity secured by a poised nobility embodying the broad interests of agriculture and the rural community. How could this quintessential age of orderly elegance be a fertile field for a Marxist? Marx himself had derided the "idiocy of rural life," and Marxists had typically shown interest in the peasantry only when, once dispossessed, they regrouped as an urban proletariat. True, an earlier generation of socialist historians had made much of the disturbances unleashed by enclosure, but the historical consensus of the 1970s was that the social repercussions of enclosure had been exaggerated.

In a stream of articles and in *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (1975), Thompson assailed these superficialities and distortions. Arguing that nostalgic historians had dreamed up a mythic preindustrial arcadia after their own imaginations, Thompson recharacterized Georgian England as riven by intense struggles, thanks to the invasion of all walks of life by rampant capitalism. Its intrusions had been more prominent in the countryside than in the town, primarily involving the transformation of agricultural practices and rural industry. Thompson's thesis was that British capitalism's great breakthrough lay in the despoliation of a traditional rural order through pursuit of laissez faire goals that gratified the rapacity of landowners and their allies and found sanction in property law and the individualist tenets of emergent political economy.

To clinch his case, it was necessary for Thompson to demolish the patronizing stereotypes of country people, whether viewed as deferential, forelock-tugging yokels or, more somberly, as demoralized and deracinated casualties. His new book—a collection of old articles, new studies, second thoughts, responses to critics and linking commentary—constitutes a brilliant and sustained attempt to recapture the true feel of a rural order that saw the propertied and the powerful relentlessly creating what a later age was to call agribusiness. Aggressive profit-maximization was instigated by a landed elite bent on depriving ordinary people of their common lands and traditional multiple-use rights (gleaning, grazing, and so forth); on imposing savage new Game Laws and hanging statutes; and (to add insult to injury) on condemning the populace as dissolute and sponsoring programs for its moral reformation. All this was countered, Thompson shows, by outbursts of rural protest that were multifaceted, widespread, resourceful, and, not least, frequently effective.

Popular resistance centered on the collective defense of ancient customs and legal entitlements. It demanded camaraderie and comradeship. It meant the articulation of a ringing language of protest and an evocative political symbolism (the loaf, the gallows, and so on), and the mobilization of "the crowd's capacity for swift direct action" in ritual acts of defiance and reprisal. Riots often resulted, targeted against profiteering millers, hated Excise officers, masters who abrogated entrenched work practices and introduced new machinery. Direct action found notable expression in "symbolic violence": effigy-burning, *taxation populaire* (the seizure of overpriced bread, the threatening of middlemen), and the tradition of the anonymous threatening letter.

Luddite machine-smashing and other such rebellious acts, Thompson has long insisted, should not be seen as blind, spasmodic knee-jerk responses. They boasted their own rationality, a logic of disciplined means and clear objectives: the argument of force was activated to boost the force of argument. The grain riots that erupted in midcentury, for example, were aimed to outflank wholesalers and dealers by reimposing traditional ordinances stipulating just prices for provisions and regulated grain markets; such protests, intended to restore the status quo, reveal the essentially conservative ethos of popular politics.

Popular resistance, Thompson convincingly shows, was neither trivial nor revolutionary; it carried weight because it could appeal to a consensual culture that blended myth and reality. Invoking collective mentalities, memories, and expectations, popular opposition to bailiffs and gamekeepers drew on larger meanings enshrined in local calendar customs, folk heroes, and biblical parables. Defense of procedures sanctified by time, precedent, and habit was expressed through age-old rites, parades, slogans, and the supercharged symbols of carnival. Thompson has labeled this normative collective culture a "moral economy." It served to give authority to widely held notions of fair wages and prices, time-honored terms of hire, and the give-and-take of rights and responsibilities, duties and interdependency in the village community.

Thompson is at pains to avoid a folksy sentimentality. If traditional *mentalités* embraced beliefs about mutuality, such reciprocity was upheld only by constant vigilance and hard bargaining; between men and masters friction was perennial, and norms were always being renegotiated. Above all, Thompson insists, the conspicuous "paternalism" of the Great must never be read on its own terms but rather judged as a theater of bombastic gestures enacted on the public stage by a ruling class whose want of military might required it to enact a compensating cultural hegemony reliant upon pomp, swank, and hauteur. Such hegemony, Thompson notes, is the form that class struggle takes at times of ostensible social quiet.

Perpetually contested, the moral economy was maintained by routine shows of grass-roots solidarity; and it was reinforced by two central, if deeply ambiguous, public institutions. On the one hand, there was the law. The much-trumpeted English common law offered an ideal of justice. Doubtless, in a legal system consecrated to the protection of property, the dice were heavily loaded in favor of those with most real estate to be protected; yet the jury system offered certain popular safeguards, and freeborn Englishmen could invoke the notion of a law "common" to all. And, on the other hand, there was the Poor Law. The traditional Poor Law unquestionably served the purposes of social control; yet its very existence enshrined some acknowledgment of societal responsibility for welfare.

However precarious, the moral economy was integral to the traditional rural fabric. Yet it suffered continuous assault from new values and practices promoted by business-minded agrarian capitalists who seized the opportunities afforded by favorable economic conditions and a parliamentary regime hand-in-glove with capital. Legal and technological innovations in agriculture and rural industry rode roughshod over traditional ways. Though most nakedly evident in the enclosure of open fields and common land, these developments were also manifest in the deregulation of the grain trade and markets, the whittling away of apprenticeship statutes, the de-skilling of labor, and the erosion of hundreds of petty but cumulatively vital village customs giving perquisites to the poor (like the right to cut turf or to "lop and top" for firewood) that made all the difference between survival and starvation.

This progressive destruction of the old

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moral economy by "market forces" could count on two staunch allies: the growing presence of the workhouse, threatening institutionalization for those resisting the new labor market and rural proletarianization; and an increasingly ferocious penal code. Capital statutes mushroomed for paltry offenses such as pickpocketing or picking fish from private ponds. Though felons often received a show of mercy, even adolescents were hanged for trifling crimes. Above all, the intensification of the Game Laws, with man-traps and spring guns legalized to sustain a grotesque privilege (ownership of wild creatures), sparked a bush war in every hamlet. At a time when continental absolutisms were liberalizing their statute books, "freedom-loving" England saw the Bloody Code grow still more sanguinary in the name of laissez faire dogmas that designated social ills the product not of profiteers or politicians but of providence. Plebeian tumults pale into insignificance when compared with the ferocity of the criminal law itself.

The moral economy was thus challenged and, in the end, vanquished by a prevailing "political economy" whose consecration of self-interest and private gain was at that very time being codified in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776), before being gradually ensconced in the Statute Book at Westminster. Political economy dictated that nothing must inhibit absolute property rights and the hunger for profit.

Thompson's interpretation of the dynamics of rural change is a tour de force. For one thing, it shows how Smithian economics was being mimed on the village green almost before it had been formulated on paper. In every tussle to maintain the Assize of Bread, in every strike to uphold wage levels, classical political economy was in action almost *avant la lettre.* If Thompson insisted, in *The Making of the English Working Class,* that class was not a thing but a process, the child of experience, here, in *Customs in Common,* we witness the making of its converse, the laws and sophistries of economics, with their appeal to laws of nature that were the laws of God, and with the later rationalization by Ricardo of the iron inevitability of rock-bottom wages. And, partly by consequence, we also see here the making of that pauperized rural mass whose existence (mystified by Malthusian demography as a timeless necessity of nature) was explained after the event as constituting the need for political economy, for the 1834 Poor Law, for the creed of "less eligibility." The dismal science thus created the problems for which it masqueraded as the solution.

Thompson's view of the remorseless progress and grim rural consequences of the cash nexus rings utterly true. The most harrowing victims of the capitalist juggernaut were not urban laborers—after all, industrial capitalism had plans for the proletariat—but those country folks uprooted from traditional tenures, who became the pathetic and often institutionalized paupers peopling the Victorian countryside.

It is debatable, however, whether Thompson presents a fully rounded picture. Critics have often accused him of selective vision with the lower orders, painting them as heroic rebels, grandfathers of the socialists. Where, they ask, are the flag-waving, yobbish, xenophobic, plebeian bigots, who manned the Gordon and Priestley Riots, and beat up Frenchmen, Catholics, and homosexuals? This criticism somewhat misses the mark, for Thompson is happy to concede the ambiguities of lower-class culture—what else would one expect in a hegemonic society so insistent on displays of deference?

Still, other objections carry greater weight. Thompson resolutely construes Georgian England as characterized by a polarized struggle between a patrician hierarchy on the one hand and a resistant plebeian culture on the other. His new book documents the heroic but doomed resistance of the old ways, the "moral economy," destroyed by profiteering grandees ratifying themselves with a "political economy" that was supposedly objective, neutral. A "moral" public discourse thus yielded to a "scientific" one that was amoral or opportunistic. Yet this is a highly partial reading of the doctrines of political economy, then or now. Far from blindly endorsing "greed is good" practices, the new economics had ethical ideals of its own to espouse, based on notions of individual opportunity, freedom, and enterprise. These may not be to Thompson's taste, but if it is the historian's job, as Thompson insists, to eschew the condescension of posterity, then he might consider giving the advocates of liberalism a fair hearing.

That is not least because the proponents of new economic attitudes amounted to more than the great sharks and the shady dealers Thompson delights to delineate. Thompson portrays capitalism spearheaded by grandee predators and parasites who, on their estates, evicted the peasantry, and, at Westminster, acted as "banditti" predators asset-stripping the commonwealth. But this reading is silent about the greater part of the story. For the distinctive feature of the success of market capitalism in Georgian England lay in its swelling bourgeoisie, in the thriving consumer economy of the "nation of shopkeepers," the intricate trading networks of small masters, artisans, journeymen, and the expanding white-collar occupations.

Was not the critical victory wrought by capitalism not the expropriation of the agrarian poor, but the seduction of the majority, as producers and as consumers, to become participants in a modernizing economy that offered genuine opportunities for advancement and potential for personal betterment for the likes of Hogarth's "industrious apprentice"? A wealth of historical studies have now documented the growing range of goods and services, from mirrors to magazines, clocks to chinaware, to which a substantial middling sector of British society had increasing access. Indeed, most economic historians now emphasize that it was rising domestic consumption levels that fueled the Industrial Revolution.

These are views to which Thompson is deeply resistant. He has always adamantly characterized the Georgian middling sort as toadies to the gentry and turned a blind eye to suggestions of the common man's support for bourgeois individualism. He seems discomfited by the possibility that decent people could actually have been benefiting from the complex processes of commercialization and industrialization. He seems reluctant to concede the possibility that the true historical strength of capitalism may lie in the extensive and essentially voluntary uptake of market opportunities by great, middling, and small folks alike.

One may respect Thompson's ideals and still conclude that his portrayal of the march of commercialism smacks as much of generous romantic outrage as of reality. One suspects that these are issues that go to the very heart of his own prejudices, and to the central problems of English Marxist historiography. They lay bare Thompson's love-hate relationship with an older, rural England; the highly patrician timbre of his Marxism, in which the historian himself assumes a mission as a neo-paternalist, "rescuing" the wretched; and his difficulties in coming to terms with the bourgeoisie—a repugnance that has all too commonly been the telltale trademark of elite, ex-public school English Marxist intellectuals.

Thompson has re-created the episode of the advance of capitalism that provoked food riots and rick-burning, but the triumph of the market needs equally to be charted through the rise of shops and workshops, consumer goods, newspapers and commodity culture, and all those other features of the bourgeois world of family life and domestic plenty

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that English Marxists have signally disdained to discuss. It is a blind spot that limits understanding of both the economic history and also the politics of emergent class society. One hopes that Thompson will grasp the nettle, and eventually crown his career with *The Making of the English Bourgeoisie.* Meanwhile, here is "socialist humanism" at its finest: a grand narrative balancing hope and pessimism, a vision of struggle, of man making his own history though not on his own terms. And here is, not least, a moving recovery of the silenced voice of the poor, battling to sustain its livelihood and identity against a dominant patrician society. *Customs in Common* is vintage Thompson, vintage history.

ROY PORTER is a reader in the social history of medicine at Wellcome Institute, London.

Book of Laughter and Remembering

BY PEARL K. BELL

Billie Dyer and Other Stories by William Maxwell

(Knopf, 112 pp., $18)

William Maxwell was born in 1908, in a small town called Lincoln at the dead center of the state of Illinois. Though he has lived in New York for a much longer time than he spent in the Midwest—he was on the editorial staff of *The New Yorker* for forty years—his novels and stories have in the main been drawn from his childhood in Lincoln and his adolescence in Chicago, where the family moved when he was 15. Through the elusive windings of memory he has returned again and again to the tragic loss that devastated his life when he was 10 years old. In 1918 his ardently adored mother—"She just shone on me like the sun"—died in the influenza epidemic that was raging throughout the country. Blossom Maxwell was 38 years old and had just given birth to her third son.

For William, the oversensitive middle child who "belonged to my mother lock, stock, and barrel" and loved her with such vulnerable dependency, her death was an expulsion from paradise, abrupt and irreversible. As Maxwell reflected many years later:

> It happened too suddenly, with no warning, and we none of us could believe it or bear it. My father's face turned the color of ashes and stayed that way a whole year.... The beautiful, imaginative, protected world of my childhood was swept away.... And so, like any survivor, I began to cherish in my mind the people and scenes of the past. It made a novelist out of me.

The English writer L. P. Hartley once said, in a much-quoted remark, that "the past is a foreign country." But this has never been so for Maxwell. Through the sixty years of his literary career, the past has been his native place, the wellspring of his art, where the marriage of memory and imagination has borne seven novels, several collections of short stories, and an idiosyncratic history of his family called *Ancestors.* (Most of Maxwell's earlier work, long out of print, has been reissued in paperback by David Godine, with cover illustrations by the author's daughter, Brookie Maxwell.) Yet though the past has been his recurrent haven, though he has been obsessively alert to the promptings of memory and has sought to recapture a vanished time through the shards and the minutiae of quotidian life, he knows how evasive and misleading memory can be, and how fruitful its distortions can become for a writer. In the attempt to retrieve the past, we create it anew, inventing as much as we remember.

Over the years Maxwell has become increasingly aware of the wily process in which the shreds of recollection are transformed by the imagination. As he reflected in his most recent novel, *So Long, See You Tomorrow* (1980), about the strange mutations of memory in fiction:

> What we, or at any rate what I, refer to confidently as memory—meaning a moment, a scene, a fact that has been subjected to a fixative and thereby rescued from oblivion—is really a form of storytelling that goes on continually in the mind and often changes with the telling.

The temptation to prettify the edenic world of childhood, to luxuriate in the vague longing of nostalgia, is the danger lurking in any effort to interweave remembrance and storytelling. Maxwell has rarely succumbed to this temptation because his scrupulous intelligence, keenly aware of the deceptions wrought by time, has been his safeguard against sentimentality. Yet he is haunted by the irremediable damage done by "the simple erosion of human forgetfulness," and he is determined to resist the inexorable crumbling of memory by bearing witness in his novels to the vanished past.

Through much of his literary career, Maxwell has sought to mingle autobiography and fiction, testing each mode to find the one that tells him: yes, this is the way it was, or could have been. But in his youthful novel *They Came Like Swallows* (1937), there seemed to be little blurring of reality by invention. He was much closer in time, of course, to the catastrophe of his childhood, and he conveyed his attachment to his mother, in life and in death, with fine-honed objectivity as he described the cozy rapture that filled the heart of a small boy every afternoon when for a brief while he had his mother all to himself. Nestled in her lap while she read to him, he was cocooned in her warmth as "her voice fell softly from above.... Like the flames, it was full of shadows. While she was reading he would look up sometimes and discover that she had yawned, or she would stop and look into the fire absently, so that he would have to remind her to go on reading." We can have no reason to doubt that this is an exact reprise of those tender afternoons, and that the account, later in the novel, of the mother's illness and death, and its shattering effect on the whole family, is just as indelibly precise.

Still, as Maxwell came to realize in *The Folded Leaf* (1945), memory by itself is not much help in coming to terms with tragedy. Without some effort to move beyond the emotional isolation of recollected pain, memory can become a festering form of regression. Thus, like many novelists of the nineteenth century—George Eliot and Trollope, Dickens and Thackeray—and scarcely any today, Maxwell freely enriched his fictional story with intellectual commentary, drawn from his reading in many fields, about the events and characters he had imagined. In portraying the metamorphosis of two starkly dissimilar young men from adolescence to the scary finalities of adulthood, he interrupts his account of a fraternity initiation in a Midwestern university to ruminate about its similarity to initiation rites in New Guinea, and then uses this anthropological parallel to affirm his belief that "the world is wonderfully large and capable of infinite repetition."

Instead of slipping invisibly into the

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skin of his characters, as though the writer has no identity beyond them—as most novelists tend to do these days—Maxwell prefers to draw back and share with us his ideas about the milieu and the personalities he has invented. Toward the end of *The Folded Leaf*, when a young man's anguished loneliness and hunger for love have plunged him over the edge, Maxwell interpolates a lyrical meditation on Spanish and Indian boys in the Southwestern desert. Though this at first seems merely digressive, the link with the unhappy young man is soon clear, as Maxwell describes the desert boys' "uncritical love" that is offered unconditionally "to goats, burros, dogs, and chickens, and it will be extended to you." Maxwell's comments on the action, in all his novels, never seem preachy or didactic. We savor the charm of a contemplative nature, redeeming the vagaries of human experience with the cool sobriety of thought.

Every serious writer stakes out a claim to a particular place and time. Maxwell, as he moved beyond the personal to a larger, public world, became absorbed by a question that arose from his concern about the mortality of memory. What was small-town America actually like in the early years of the century? Intensely committed to what he saw as the complex reality of his own America, Maxwell could not accept the extreme and contrary versions of Midwestern life offered by the hackneyed sentimentality of Booth Tarkington's Penrod stories on the one hand, or the psychological grimness of Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg on the other.

In *Time Will Darken It* (1948), he looked back to a supposedly simple and placid time in the history of Lincoln (here called Draperville) and seemed on the surface to be aiming only for a faithful re-creation of ordinary everyday life in 1912, when the roads leading out of town were still unpaved, the horse-and-buggy had not yet been replaced by the automobile, and "the outside world impinged so lightly ... and people had little to amuse them but the drama of personal relationships."

By the time he published this ambitious novel, however, Maxwell's sense of the past and the small-town world of the Midwest, his confidence in the power of memory to retrieve the serenity of the life destroyed by his mother's death, and his view of human character had all become more somber and complex. "The world ... is not a nice place," he now declared, "and the young have to take their chances. They cannot be watched over, twenty-four hours a day. At what moment, from whatever hiding place, the idea of evil will strike, there is no telling."

Time Will Darken It, far from being a sunny celebration of the good old days, is a disturbing novel, in which Maxwell skillfully dramatizes the clash between idealized private memories and messy, often sinister reality. The "drama of personal relationships" in this Lincoln portrait, far from benign, is often soured by malicious gossip and spiteful lies, crooked business deals, strangulating mothers who selfishly exploit their spinster daughters.

Austin King, the lawyer at the center of the story, a man of unimpeachable kindness and probity, wants to do well by everyone plucking at his conscience, and finds himself maligned, and worse, at every turn. His willful, discontented wife converts trivial misunderstandings into raging scenes, and in one chilling episode, as she systematically cuts to pieces a dress her husband is especially fond of, her deeper desire—to cut him up—is not lost on us. In contrast, we are shown Austin King devoting an evening to pasting cheerful snapshots into a big black scrapbook ("the great American encyclopedia of sentimental occasions, family gatherings, and stages in the growth of children"), and Maxwell then offers a long list of the different images one was likely to find in such iconographic keepsakes. While the memory of domestic placidity is frozen into the album's pages, we are reminded, in one of Maxwell's astringent asides, that "it is a common delusion of gentle people that the world is also gentle, considerate, and fair. Cruelty and suspicion find them eternally unprepared."

As we read this, Sherwood Anderson inevitably makes his importunate raid on our consciousness, for his vision of Midwestern life and people in the early years of the century is so drastically unlike William Maxwell's. Though the younger writer is perfectly aware of the dark currents beneath the pleasant surface of the town, his Lincoln is an altogether different place than Winesburg, Ohio. For one thing, as Irving Howe has pointed out in his fine study of Anderson, "If read as social fiction *Winesburg* is somewhat absurd, for no such town could possibly exist.... In its fundamental quality *Winesburg* is non-realistic; it does not seek to gratify the eye with a verisimilitude to social form." But Maxwell *is* a realist, a novelist intrigued by the nuances of social form, and a strongly visual writer fascinated by the way things look and feel.

More important, the grotesques of Anderson are not to be found in Maxwell's world. The repression and sex-

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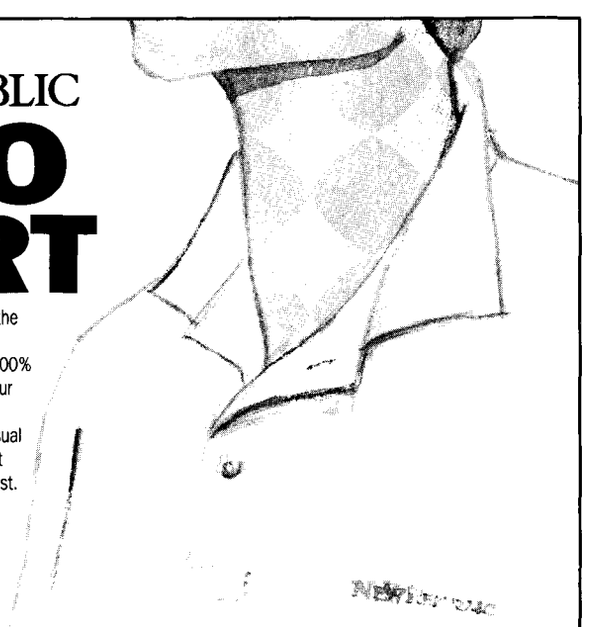

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ual frustration, the stunted souls, the crippling isolation and hopelessness of Anderson's Ohio are nowhere evident in the Lincoln of Maxwell's childhood. Of course we know better: sexual dislocation, the frustrated longing to escape from the constraints of village life—some of this must have existed in Lincoln, as it did anywhere in America at that time. But the abnormally twisted personalities of Winesburg do not exist in Maxwell's memories for a simple reason: he knew that tranquil and comfortable world only as a child, while Anderson's experience of the bleak, dour psychological landscape of Ohio was not limited to his youth.

As Maxwell has observed, "The fact that I had not lived [in Lincoln] since I was 14 years old sealed off my memories of it, and made of it a world I knew no longer existed, that seemed always available for storytelling." What is stored, if not entirely cherished, in the memory of a child, especially a child cushioned by a large and affectionate family, is obviously of a different cast from the more tangled and troubled recollections of a grown-up. In the autobiographical sections of *Ancestors*, Maxwell does not speak of cruelty and suspicion, but affectionately recalls the sweetness of his childish days, the warm and loving grandparents and cousins and aunts, and he laments the passing of a time when "men and women alike appeared to accept with equanimity the circumstances (on the whole, commonplace and unchanging) of their lives in a way that no one seems able to do now anywhere. This is how I remember it." And it is not in the least how Anderson remembered that era and that region.

In any case, the nature of experience is hardly a clear matter of either/or. Neither is temperament; there is no meeting point between Anderson's creaky mysticism and Maxwell's down-to-earth pleasure in domestic facts, but that doesn't necessarily make one writer's work more "true" than another's. And neither are families. Maxwell makes the point succinctly in *Ancestors*: "I believe in Winesburg, Ohio, but I also believe in what I remember."

How far can we trust what we remember? We know, as Proust famously demonstrated, that a single incident can trigger a flood of involuntary memories. But are we remembering what actually occurred, or are we distorting, expanding, denying, and fabricating what we claim to "recall"? In one of his meditations on memory, Maxwell has claimed that "in talking about the past we lie with every breath we draw." He was not accusing us of deliberate falsehood but thinking about the mystery and ambiguity that are part of every strand of memory, the way recollection inevitably becomes suspect as it grows into a form of fiction. And the confusion between remembering and *imagining* that we remember intensifies as we grow older.

In the short novel *So Long, See You Tomorrow*, written when he was in his 70s, Maxwell explicitly set out to demonstrate the various ways a writer can use the intertwining of memory and imagination, and how in the process fact and fantasy are wound into an indissoluble skein. In the beginning, he is clearly talking about events that actually happened: a murder and suicide that rocked the community of Lincoln in the 1920s. Thinking back, he remembers the tenuous link the murder had with his own life.

William and his schoolmate Cletus while away the after-school hours climbing over the skeleton of an unfinished house. One day Cletus vanishes because his father, a tenant farmer, had shot his neighbor to death and then killed himself. Several years later William encounters his lost friend in a Chicago high school and inexplicably walks on without a glance of recognition. And his guilt, festering for years, eventually arouses his curiosity about the events that led up to the murder and Cletus's disappearance.

What began as a memoir is then transformed, with seamless subtlety, into a story whose details the writer could not have known directly. As the imagination takes over, Maxwell spins out a compressed but harrowing tale, reminiscent of *Ethan Frome*, about coveting thy neighbor's wife, rural isolation and poverty, humiliating drudgery, unhappy marriages, and the unassuageable pain that the sins of parents can inflict on their children. The novella is Maxwell's most persuasive expression of his lifelong belief in the inseparability of autobiography and fiction.

Though the title of his new book, *Billie Dyer and Other Stories*, identifies it as fiction, it is really a straightforward memoir—a gathering of family anecdotes moving back and forth in time, bits of Lincoln history, fragments of prosaic reality unaltered by invention. Most of the "stories" retrace ground he has explored more winningly in earlier books, and the accounts of his father's friends, his aggressively reckless older brother, his pitiful Uncle Ted, and others seem more like leftover patches of family lore than literature. But at the age of 83, Maxwell ruefully knows that the landscape of the past is in danger of disappearing altogether: perhaps this is why he now concentrates on actuality rather than literary artifice.

Still, this rather wilted bouquet of memories does come to life in the title story, which grows out of Maxwell's renewed interest in a segment of Lincoln society—the blacks who worked for the predominantly white middle class—that he had portrayed only once before, and then conventionally, in *Time Will Darken It*. Like the other white children, Maxwell was fleetingly aware of blacks like old Alfred Dyer, who tended the furnace, and he took for granted the pillowy presence of black domestics in the kitchen. Otherwise the blacks remained invisible, and even a recent history of Lincoln, he points out, omits them altogether. But it was a long-lost document that Maxwell acquired many years after he had settled in the East that led him to search out everything he could learn about Alfred's son Billie, who relentlessly pursued his dream of becoming a doctor.

The grandson of a slave, Billie showed promise at an early age, and was partly supported through medical school by some generous citizens of Lincoln, though he had to drop out so often to earn more money that he took thirteen years to complete his studies. He came home in 1917 to begin his practice, even though some whites in the town felt "that in becoming a doctor [Billie Dyer] had imitated the ways of white people . . . and done something that was not really necessary." But before he could hang out his shingle, he became the first black in Lincoln to be inducted into the Army.

During his month of military service in France, Billie kept a diary, and it is this remarkable account of his months overseas, miraculously preserved for decades, that Maxwell shares with us, in long excerpts that form the heart of the story. In plain-spoken but sharply observant entries, and without a bleat of self-pity, the young doctor told of the hardships of battle, the humiliations of segregation, the beauty of the French countryside, the sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile French who gawked at the black Americans bivouacked in Brest and Marseilles, Poitiers and Verdun. Dr. Dyer recorded his experiences in such unpretentious and vivid prose that the story becomes one more eloquent testament to the power of writing to capture what was once a living present.

In the course of Maxwell's growth as novelist, after his early reliance on the faithful reproduction of memory, his work grew into an act of the imagination that could encompass a world of time and thought beyond the immediacy of recollection. By transfiguring the past in the crucible of art, he has held it in trust for the future.

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NEWARK DIARIST

Partisans

"THERE ARE SO MANY GREAT WRITers you can't enjoy it," said my friend Mircea Mihaies. "It is too much." Mircea is the soft-spoken editor of *Orizont* (Horizon), a literary magazine published in Timisoara, Romania. In December 1989, when the rising against Ceausescu erupted in that city, he was a copy editor. In the heady days of the rebellion, the staff threw out the apparatchiks and elected Mircea editor in chief, a rise that parallels that of other powerless dissidents to positions of authority throughout Eastern and Central Europe. Mircea's modesty survived his elevation; at Rutgers University in Newark for a conference organized by *Partisan Review* on Intellectuals and Social Change in Eastern Europe, he was overwhelmed by the proximity of so many cultural heroes. At lunch with us were three winners of the Nobel Prize: Saul Bellow, Czeslaw Milosz, and Joseph Brodsky, as well as Ralph Ellison, Doris Lessing, Vassily Aksyonov, and many others. Still, Mircea managed to talk to most of his idols. Laying a gentle hand on the author's shoulder, he says, just above a whisper, "Hello, I am from Romania . . . "

THE PRINCIPAL THEMES OF THE conference were sounded by Bellow at the outset. Paraphrasing one of Vaclav Havel's letters from prison (where Havel read Bellow's *Herzog*), Bellow noted that in the East, literature was once forbidden, and regarded with utmost seriousness. In the West, by contrast, a writer "can make as many revolutionary statements as he wishes—and no one gives a damn or pays attention." The question Bellow posed was "whether we need these colonial evils of dictatorship to keep us honest"—in other words, whether Eastern European writers have lost something valuable by defeating the persecution they fought for so long. A first answer to Bellow was offered by Brodsky, though he rushed in late and missed Bellow's opening statement. The role of writers in the East was going to be substantially diminished, Brodsky said, and that was good news. "The best thing a writer can hope for is to contribute to the bourgeoisie, without which the development of the democratic state is unthinkable," he said. Bellow and Brodsky agreed that the advent of political normality was desirable, but Bellow, the Chicago cynic, worried that it would consign literature to the status it has acquired in the United States—that of an elitist activity. Brodsky, the Leningrad optimist, thinks that writers are driven by their sense of language, not persecution, and worries less about the fate of culture in a free society. But Brodsky's central contribution to the conference may have been his answer to the problem of how to refer to the old Soviet Union. He calls it "the ruble zone."

THE OUTRAGE OF THE CONFERence was a talk by the Russian storyteller Tatyana Tolstaya, who even among fellow dissidents has an admirable instinct to stir things up. Given a choice between nationalism and imperialism, Tolstaya said she would choose imperialism as the lesser of two evils. There is no part of Russia, she explained, that is not disputed, whether by Finnish tribes who claim the land where St. Petersburg now stands, or Tatars who say they own the Crimea. Everywhere—"the mud huts, the mosquitoes"—belonged once to someone else. "For a Russian, the question of self-definition is very painful," she said. "Whatever you are is denied by someone else." In a spiral of rising nationalisms, "the hairsplitting will never end." A couple of Ukrainian gentlemen lined up at the microphone to object loudly. Tolstaya said that Ukrainians should try to think how Russians felt for a change. Besides, she noted acerbically, writers work in exaggeration; her imperialism was obviously not that of Stalin or of Kipling.

THE LIVELIEST PANEL OF ALL WAS the next morning's, thanks to Aksyonov, the Romanian political scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu, Susan Sontag, and Adam Michnik, who speaks no English but was ably interpreted by TNR cult figure Anna Husarska. Within a few minutes, all five were smoking and talking furiously. Michnik developed the theme, first touched upon by Bellow and Brodsky, of the contrasting legacies of the French and American Revolutions. The French was ancestor to 1917, Michnik said; it represented intellectuals trying to build a collectivist utopia. The American, on the other hand, gave birth to the revolutions of 1989, when intellectuals tried to rebuild the state around the idea of individual freedom subject to the rule of law. Tismaneanu picked up this point, arguing as he does in his new book *Reinventing Politics* that intellectuals like Michnik were vital in Eastern Europe's transformation. They deserved much credit for dismantling the old structures and casting doubt on the legitimacy of the Leninist regimes. Though much of their aura has worn off thanks to their involvement in practical politics, Tismaneanu argued that intellectuals still have a vital role to play. "It is because critical intellectuals did so much in preserving the values of free communication between human beings that they cannot simply resign and leave the public sphere to the adventurers, mafiosi, and charlatans," he said. Liberal intellectuals in post-Communist regimes, he added, "remain the repository of democratic hopes."

ONE SUCH REPOSITory is Eda Kriseová, a novelist who is a member of Havel's advisory board, as well as his biographer. Her talk on the last day, titled, "Where I Hid My Manuscript," was one of the highlights of the meeting. When Kriseová first received an exit visa from Czechoslovakia in 1988, she visited Harvard, where she was to give a reading. Sitting down at a computer terminal in Widener Library, she typed in the words "Czech underground literature." To her surprise, the computer responded. She then typed her own name. The computer answered that it had carbon copies of some of her own samizdat manuscripts. "I burst into tears," she said. "I felt like a victorious Robinson Crusoe, whose message in the bottle had washed up on shore."

ON THE LAST DAY IT WAS MY FRIEND Mircea's turn to speak. His paper, "The Neighbors of Franz Kafka," was about the envy he felt, as a Romanian, in visiting Prague for the first time a few months ago. "They had Charter 77—we the 1977 earthquake. They had Havel—we the Iliescu-Roman duo," he said. Mircea asked whether it could be that Romanians really preferred their neo-Communist junta to the path of Prague. His depressing answer was yes: many of his countrymen actually liked the predictability of a static dictatorship. In his words: "For a large part of Romania, the idea of civil society does not exist. The only thing that matters is the small personal arrangement, the small barely warm spot." His talk was a reminder that even in Eastern Europe, the people are not always heroes, that extraordinary leadership is required for the transformation of a sick society, and that sometimes, even moral leadership isn't enough.

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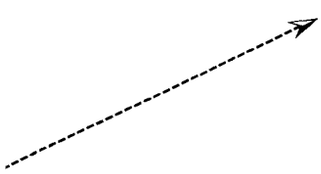

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